

## Book reviews

### ALEXANDER MACLEAY: FROM SCOTLAND TO SYDNEY

By Derelie Cherry

2012. Published by Paradise Publishers, Kulnura, NSW, Australia. 464 pp.

Hardback, AU\$59.95, ISBN 9780646557526.

This is Derelie Cherry's second book, although it is her first serious scholarly effort. It is closely derived from her PhD thesis on the same subject. She lives in a stunning garden set in the hinterland of the central coast of New South Wales. Her interest in Alexander Macleay no doubt blossomed when discovering his Elizabeth Bay mansion and finding it once boasted a garden without equal in the southern hemisphere. Both Derelie's and Alexander's gardens share in the surrounding Sydney sandstones. It is not too big a leap of thought to grasp the connection between author and subject.

This is a biography about Alexander Macleay, the 'Father of Australian Zoology'. It fills a giant gap in the history of early Australia and our knowledge of Alexander Macleay, the Colonial Secretary of New South Wales and the first Speaker of the Legislative Council. The book also goes a long way in re-examining controversial aspects of Australia's early colonial history, because Alexander Macleay was a central political character of the day. The aim of this book is to fill the gap left in Australian history by the lack of this biography.

The bulk of the book is divided into nine chapters, each of which proceed chronologically through Macleay's life and works, discussing in depth matters such as Alexander's infancy with sections of the popular media and the political intrigues of early colonial Australia. In each chapter there are brief sub-sections with distinct and practical headings that further sub-divide the text into manageable chunks. As a scholarly book based on a PhD it has been suitably furnished with timeline, acknowledgements, foreword (by Professor Stephen Garton, Deputy Vice Chancellor, University of Sydney), introduction, epilogue, comprehensive notes, bibliography and an index.

The nine chapters have been handled with varying degrees of accuracy and detail. The first and second describe Alexander's roots in 18th century Scotland and his formative years in surprising detail. The second through fourth chapters give considerable detail of Alexander in colonial New South Wales in his position as the Colonial Secretary (second in charge to the Governor) and his time as the first Speaker in the Legislative Council. This includes the tumultuous period ending in the recall of Governor Darling. Chapter five explores Alexander and family's social life in the colony, drawing heavily on surviving correspondences. Chapter six outlines the roles of Alexander and his eldest son William Sharp Macleay in natural history and culminates with a brief summary of the role of his nephew William John Macleay in establishing the Macleay Museum. This is a somewhat disappointing chapter that shows the author was not familiar with natural history and was not able to explore this area in any depth. Some errors were noted in this section,

for example, John Gould is erroneously given as 'the famous American bird painter' (p. 253) – he was an English ornithologist. However, there is considerable amount of useful detail on Alexander's involvement with the foundation of the Colonial Museum, later known as the Australian Museum. Chapter seven explores Alexander's passion for plants; this section is comprehensively detailed exploring the plants, gardeners and colonial and Scottish horticulture. Here we see the author's background in gardens come to the fore, although Flannel Flowers are not *Telopea*, they are *Actinotus*, and the species depicted is *A. helianthi* (p. 292). Despite this single error the chapter is a highlight of the book and has been broadly and deeply researched. Derelie Cherry wanders a little in describing Alexander's 54 acre garden at Elizabeth Bay, finding many sources that would not immediately fall to historians and natural historians – she has almost brought this extinct garden back to life. Chapter eight is again a deeply researched though relatively short section on Alexander's numerous pastoral properties. The ninth and concluding chapter delves into the final episodes of Macleay's life until his death. It explores his time as speaker of the Legislative Council and provides detail on the politics of this time and ends by exploring details of Macleay's pecuniary problems, which almost saw him end in a debtor's court.

This is an interpretive and descriptive history packed with detail and first hand descriptions from those people around Alexander Macleay, his family, friends and enemies. The reading audience includes anyone interested in the colonial history of Australia, its politics and administration, and of course Alexander Macleay himself. The book is not merely pitched at historians. It is very readable by a much wider audience, especially those looking for the background of colonial Australia. As a natural historian I found the background deeply informative, giving me a view of colonial days from the top as opposed to the level that John Gilbert or Ludwig Leichardt would have experienced.

The clear strength of this book is the extensive research. The author has searched through much of the limited historical and biographical literature available, she has drawn heavily on newspapers and surviving correspondences. The newspapers of the day reported continuously on Alexander Macleay, because he held high political office. Alas, many of these articles present a negative picture of Macleay, because his politics were not in line with theirs. A particular strength of the book is the inclusion and treatment of Fanny Macleay's (Alexander's eldest daughter) correspondences, which allow us to get a more personal insight into Alexander. Alas, the weakness of the text is in the lack of depth and understanding of Macleay's part in natural history, this section falls well short of the detail required given its importance in Alexander's life. However, his earlier days as Secretary of the Linnean Society of London are given in more useful detail.

One of the difficulties in compiling a book based on many disparate references, at times taken from position poles apart, is trying to bring them together to support your interpretive thesis. The author has achieved this admirably. One important source used in this book is the letters from Fanny Macleay, who wrote many letters to her older brother William Sharp Macleay. The

author has juxtaposed Fanny's opinions, to the personal diaries of others, official documents and newspaper articles to provide support for the author's point-of-view and to add a depth of personal feeling to the historical events. The result is a rounded picture of the historical events with the addition of a feminist perspective too often missing from the interpretation of history. What has been achieved in the text regarding these letters has been achieved throughout using the many and varied sources. The organisation of the text into relevant chapters and sub-chapters helps organise these fragmented data into coherent chunks, making an otherwise disrupted narrative easy to follow.

The style of writing is easy to follow, which is perhaps surprising in a thesis involving so many references and a fragmented knowledge. Overall it runs smoothly, although a little more attention to grammar and the clarity of expression in a few instances would have benefitted this reader; but this is a minor criticism.

The quality of the numerous plates found throughout the book is excellent, both in function and in presentation. Most are paintings and sketches from artists of the day and all have highly

informative legends. The book itself is one of the most beautifully presented books I have seen. The attention to detail in preparation is evident in the quality of the printing and the layout, organisation and design.

I would recommend this book to those interested in the colonial history of Australia and particularly those wanting a background to its political and social history from the top end of town. Generalist readers will enjoy easy-enough reading and the superb presentation. The book is also useful for students of history of horticulture in early New South Wales. While it falls short in natural history elements it still has leads for botanists and zoologists to follow. This book will undoubtedly hold a place for a long time as the definitive biology of Alexander Macleay.

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## HBW AND BIRDLIFE INTERNATIONAL ILLUSTRATED CHECKLIST OF THE BIRDS OF THE WORLD, VOLUME 1: NON-PASSERINES

By Josep del Hoyo and Nigel J. Collar

2014. Published by Lynx Edicions, Barcelona, Spain. 903 pp., 4.28 kg.

Hardback, Euro €185.00, free shipping worldwide,  
ISBN 9788496553941.

The accounts in this volume are based on the accounts from the first seven volumes of *Handbook of the Birds of the World* (HBW). This illustrated edition was written by many including the authors of the aforementioned volumes. It was edited by Josep del Hoyo the Senior Editor of HBW (del Hoyo *et al.* 1992–2013) and Nigel J. Collar a Leventis Fellow in Conservation Biology, BirdLife International. Lynx Edicions published this volume in association with BirdLife International. Essentially the people and organisations best qualified to complete such a complex project. This volume (non-passerines) is the first of two volumes that aims to put all the world's birds into one checklist. It is a vast and complex project that has drawn heavily from HBW, but has been updated to reflect changing knowledge. This is not the first checklist of the world's birds, it follows from and builds upon others (e.g. Peters 1934–1987; Sibley and Monroe 1990 and 1993) it is most notably different from these in that it is illustrated in colour.

The volume is structured in checklist fashion: a taxonomic list and introduction precede the checklist with the species accounts; this is followed by three appendices – two covering extinct species and a third an atlas, which helps the readers to interpret the maps. The first two appendices are simply extinct taxa that could and could not be illustrated. The volume is closed with a bibliography and an index. The species accounts occupy

over 700 pages and present the bulk and purpose of the volume. This is set-out with illustrations and distribution maps on the right page and the accompanying text on the left as in field guides and handbooks. The text is concise and gives: English and scientific names, a coloured box with the ICUN threat ranking, the corresponding HBW volume and page number, French, German and Spanish names, basic taxonomic notes (includes authority), subspecies and distribution. One striking difference between this and previous checklists is its lengthy 35 page introduction. The editors fully intended to produce a comprehensive introduction with no 'lack of modesty', which is intended to involve, stimulate and make the users part of the process in improving the checklist. General backgrounding is given on the speciation processes and its two most familiar explanations: the biological species concept, reliant on the presence or absence of interbreeding, and the phylogenetic species concept, based on (Cracraft 1983) with the criterion of diagnoseability. After pointing to the merits and weaknesses in these concepts the editors opt for the Tobias criteria to delimit species. A quantitative method that generates a score using traits such as phenotypic differences in song, plumage and biometrics along with characters, which can be described, measured or counted, or are consistent in the sex/age class of the taxon (for a full explanation see Tobias *et al.* 2010). When the score generated by these criteria reaches a threshold of least seven the taxon qualifies as a species in this checklist. The editors have avoided using terminal taxa as 'species-units' in this volume because of their concerns that molecular techniques still inconsistently delimit taxa and that there would be too many taxa generated. The remaining pages of the introduction give detailed explanations of the core parts of the checklist and how to navigate through the text and maps.

The most obvious difference between this and other checklists is that it is illustrated. The illustrations are clear and well detailed and in full colour. Many are taken from HBW, although new illustrations are included for new species (mostly added

through splitting or lumping), although some illustrations have been revised. The maps are small, postage-stamp sized, yet clear and colour-coded to address variations such as migrations and breeding ranges.

In terms of strengths and weaknesses my first thought was – it's big, therefore please make it into a searchable and friendly webpage. The good news is that this checklist is designed to be an ongoing process (a work in progress) with input from the users on HBW Alive ([www.hbw.com](http://www.hbw.com)). This website has basic information, but full detail is available to subscribers. One weakness that I see is that the most important birds, the Passeriformes, have again been left till last; now I await Volume 2, proposed for 2016. The strengths are having all the world's birds, up to date and illustrated in colour with maps and taxonomic notes at your fingertips in a single volume and conveniently on the same double-page spread. The illustrations are the recognisable units that many readers will identify with quickly when searching for taxa. The adoption of the Tobias criteria for delimiting species will be a strength for some and a weakness for others. I suspect that a majority may see it as a strength. I would prefer the full use of terminal taxa, in which each taxon is represented on a tree as the tip of each branch no matter how small and in that way equal to others.

The text aids ornithology by consolidating a great deal of information in one place and then concisely putting that core data conveniently at your fingertips. Outside the book but within the scope of the project the latest data can be investigated though the website, which is being constantly updated. It is an important research tool and a useful addition to any biological or ornithological library. Ecologists need to know exactly what taxa they are working with to be able to report their findings. Systematists and the subset of taxonomists will see this as another step perhaps closer to the final understanding of the avian tree. It will become a standard text for many with very varied functions.

The research and level of referencing are massive, much of which has been taken from the seven volumes (non-passerines) of the HBW and then updated considerably for this text. The bibliography in this text contains 1982 citations and the large introduction also carries a substantial citation list. The writing style is concise within the checklist as might be expected and it is simple and clear to navigate. The introduction, discussed above,

seems a little subjective arguing towards a point that would suit the authors then opting for the Tobias criteria. The remainder of the introduction is objective clearly explaining in necessary detail the sections of the checklist and how to use them. Supplementary material in the form of colour illustrations and photographs in the introduction are well used large, clear and to the point. The book is about quarto-sized, the same size as the original HBW volumes. The paper used in the book was sourced from managed sustainable forests.

The audience addressed by this work must be strong enough to lift its 4.28 kg. Its size and content clearly identify it as a serious reference for professionals and libraries, although no doubt there will be some amateur birders who will want it. I would recommend this book to reference libraries especially biological libraries, museum libraries and those people that need a checklist of the world's birds for their work. The introduction would be useful for biodiversity students and those interested in the delimitation of species/subspecies and terminal taxa.

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## SLOW TRAVEL AND TOURISM

By Janet Dickinson and Les Lumsdon  
2010. Earthscan, London, UK. 232 pp.  
Paperback, AU\$59.99, ISBN 9781849711135.

In the same way that slow food is the cure for malaise associated with fast food, slow tourism is touted as an antidote to fast-paced, long-distance, short-duration travel that increasingly dominates the travel scene. But what constitutes slow tourism or travel? Dickinson and Lumsdon give us a very thorough and well researched account of what is included in the notion of slow tourism, and an exploration of the merits and impacts of these. Slow travel appears a complex beast to define, but essentially

encompasses the importance of the travel both to and within a destination, engaging with the modes of transport, a deeper exploration of the destination localities, all with the lowest feasible environmental impact.

The book focuses largely on the most notable environmental impact associated with travel: greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Most of these emissions (87%) occur during the physical travel part of the trip, accommodation accounts for only 9% and activities 4%. Therefore slow travel essentially rules out, by their definition, any transport that includes plane, car or cruise ship. They argue that reducing GHG emissions, or ideally, becoming carbon-neutral, is the main challenge to the tourism sector. As evidence of the depth to the discussion of the issues associated with their topic, the authors even provide a detailed account of international and national climate change policy,

starting with the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 and including the EU's Emissions Trading Scheme (Chapter 2).

The authors remind us that the social impacts of travel are also in need of consideration. Tourism is widely thought of as a path to poverty alleviation in developing countries. The authors draw upon a wide range of studies to show us why poverty alleviation is too complex for tourism alone to solve. For instance, tourists are in competition with locals for access to scarce natural resources, job opportunities associated with tourism are often limited, tourism increases house prices and leads to general inflation, and increases environmental destruction, pollution, litter and traffic. Some studies go as far as referring to tourism as neo-colonialism. There is a distinct disparity of who are responsible for the greatest emissions from travel, as only 2–3% of the world's population take international flights. The authors point out the irony in the wealthy expending large amounts of GHGs for leisure trips to the places which are likely to bear the brunt of climate change. The role for slow travel, therefore, is to consciously minimise both the social and environmental impacts of travel.

A review of the attitude and behaviour research related to travel (chapter 3) informs us about the psychology of consumption, the sociology of mobility, and motivation for travel and travel modes. We learn that some travel modes, such as the car or bike, are associated with our identity. However many people that choose environmentally-friendly options in their daily lives are reluctant to be constrained by how they spend their one holiday a year. This is thought to be because green behaviours in daily routines are more established than those related to tourism travel. In other social circles however, being known as an environmentally-friendly traveller is important for status.

*Slow Travel and Tourism* gives us detailed case studies of the main slow travel modes: train, walking, cycling, bus and water-based travel. These modes of transport are a way of life for most of the world's population. For slow tourism, these are all modes to reach a destination for a holiday, but also the holiday itself. Despite air- and car-based travel becoming more entrenched, the popularity of the slow travel modes is increasing as more people recognise the importance of low-impact travel and its benefits. In western countries, walking can be seen as a release from the hectic pace of life. Both walking and cycling are seen as important for physical health. Bus and train travel can have advantages over private vehicles: no need for parking, ease of sight-seeing, not needing to drive on unfamiliar roads, and being able to relax rather than concentrating on driving. Ideally, slow travel modes will become accessible without any

car or air travel; for example, not driving to the bus stop or hiking trail.

Sadly, many aspects of slow tourism are unlikely to appeal to the current majority of holiday-makers. Inadequate physical fitness in up to 70% of adults in some affluent countries means that travel modes involving physical exertion will only be an option for a niche market. The authors cite a US study on transportation which concluded that most Americans do not walk at all. The accessibility of faster modes of travel has led to greater geographic dispersal within families, and many people fit long-distance family visits into short-duration trips made possible by car and air. While cheap fuel and airfares remain, the cost incentive to choose slow travel modes is not sufficient to influence the majority. However, as climate change and peak oil are factored into costing, fossil-fuel based travel is likely to become less viable, and increasing the popularity of slow travel.

Currently, slow travel is particularly viable for destinations in close proximity to one's origin, preferably with bike or pedestrian-friendly tracks and charming train lines, and suited to people in good physical health. There may be few slow travel options in sparsely-populated areas with limited public transport and without cycling or walking tracks. *Slow Travel and Tourism* provides the recommendations made by the European Commission Tourism Sustainability Group to address the impact of tourism transport. These include involving the aviation sector in emission trading schemes, improving slow travel infrastructure, integrating different types of transport services and promoting fewer but longer holidays.

*Slow Travel and Tourism* is an exceedingly detailed account of all aspects associated with its topic. It leaves no stone unturned: even concepts as seemingly intuitive as 'walking' and 'cycling' are defined. The authors even go as far as considering the extra CO<sub>2</sub> exhaled while cycling as a result of the greater intake of O<sub>2</sub> which occurs under exertion. *Slow Travel and Tourism* is widely referenced and packed with lots of great information, especially on the carbon output side of travel. Interestingly, there is a lack of cradle-to-grave analysis of transport infrastructure, which seems to be a fairly large omission to an otherwise fairly comprehensive review. While being extremely informative, it is a dry, academic text and not one I'd recommend for reading while relaxing on your next slow holiday.

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