

## Book review

### THE AUSTRALIAN BIRD GUIDE: REVISED EDITION

By Peter Menkhorst, Danny Rogers, Rohan Clarke, Jeff Davies, Peter Marsack, and Kim Franklin

2019. Published by CSIRO Publishing, Melbourne, Australia. 576 pp.

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This is a revision of the bird guide first published by CSIRO in 2017 and which I reviewed for *Pacific Conservation Biology* (Recher 2017). My original review was lengthy and more an ‘opinion piece’ than a book review. In it I discussed at length my concerns with current trends in avian nomenclature as well as commenting on the merits and usefulness of the guide. I went to pains to point out that although referred to as a field guide, ‘The Australian Bird Guide’, was too bulky and heavy to carry in the field and was better described as a mini-handbook. I also noted the excellent quality of the illustrations and the comprehensive coverage of Australian birds including rarities and vagrants. I did have some concerns with the text of different species and know that others were concerned about errors in some maps particularly as related to Western Australia. Although I might continue to quibble on a point here and there in accounts of species I know well, so far as I can see, any errors or important omissions have been corrected in this revised edition.

The original edition of ‘The Australian Bird Guide’ justifiably received considerable acclaim being awarded the Whitley Medal of the Royal Zoological Society (NSW) in 2018 and the 2018 Australian Book Industry (ABIA) Small Publishers Adult Book of the Year. This revised version continues that tradition of excellence.

Maps, artwork, and species accounts have been updated, although it takes careful inspection to find where the changes have been made. The most important change is in the index, which is now far easier to use and locate species either by their scientific or Australian name. Nomenclature continues to follow

Gill and Donsker (2015) thereby persisting in annoying me; I will just continue to ignore current nomenclature and use the names for the birds I study and write about that I’ve used since the 1969 list of Harry Frith and John Calaby (CSIRO 1969). The arrangement of taxa and species accounts remains the same in this revised edition and persons who have the first edition of ‘The Australian Bird Guide’ have no need to buy the revised edition. Both are excellent and one or the other deserves a place in every Australian ornithological library. Fortunately the multi-volume ‘Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds’ is being digitized and hopefully will soon be on-line (Paul Sullivan *in litt.*, 6 May 2019) and with that ‘The Australian Bird Guide’ will become even more useful given its comprehensive and superb illustrations of Australian birds that will greatly enhance the value of the Handbook.

Finally, I must compliment the publishers, CSIRO Publishing, for continuing to make this mini-handbook available at a cost those of us in retirement or without access to tax deductions can afford. Thank you. Also of note is the fact that books, such as ‘The Australian Bird Guide’, are important for the conservation of Australia’s flora and fauna; they bring nature to people and enable everyone to identify and take joy in the birds, other animals, and plants that we share the world with. For that I thank the authors who obviously devoted considerable time, thought, and love to its production.

Harry F. Recher

Australian Museum Research Institute, Sydney, and  
Environmental and Conservation Sciences,  
Murdoch University, Australia.

### References

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- Recher, H. F. (2017). Field guides, bird names, and conservation. *Pacific Conservation Biology* **23**, 315–323. doi:10.1071/PC17019