

**Birds of the Fiji Bush** by F. Clunie, illustrated by P. Morse. 1984. Fiji Museum, Suva. 160 pp, 54 colour plates and 13 drawings. 75 species identified. F\$6.50 p & p. F\$2.50.

The past three years have seen two new books on Fiji birds written by local ornithologists. Their up-to-date accounts emphasise the lack of basic biology of most species, which includes a high percentage of endemics (40%). Such books illustrate the scope for amateurs, including visitors, to contribute some useful new information which warrants publication in some form. Dick Watling's *Birds of Fiji, Tonga and Samoa* (1982, reviewed in *Notornis* 30(1): 77-79) provided a valuable compendium of birds of the region, including much new data and a comprehensive bibliography. The colour illustrations were a marked improvement on those provided in J. du Pont's *South Pacific Birds* (1976), where many inaccuracies arose from lack of local knowledge. The *Birds of Fiji in Colour*, with 24 illustrations by W. Belcher and text by R.B. Sibson, was mainly for tourists and is now out of print, as is the very cheap pocket guide by R. Mercer. E. Mayr's valuable *Birds of the Southwest Pacific* (1945, reprinted by Wheldon & Wesley 1968) lacks the few colour plates it had in the original.

Fergus Clunie has provided a much-needed field guide which not only complements Watling's book but is also inexpensive. Although a second volume is in preparation on Fijian sea and shore birds, the present one is more valuable, filling an important gap. It avoids the pitfall of providing maps of distribution, dubious because many tropical birds have patchy distributions. Patricia Morse's illustrations are perhaps the best yet of Fiji birds, at least for a field guide. Another advantage is that they are interspersed in the text close to the written description. Species without colour plates are generally familiar ones: mynas, magpies, House Sparrow, Starling, Jungle Fowl and White-faced Heron.

The brief introduction on conservation and the impact of introduced mammals is a familiar picture to New Zealanders. The map and index are sufficient for most users, but I question the inclusion of the section on Fijian bird names by Paul Geraghty. Although it may be useful in indicating past distributions, the complexity of using map and table, not to mention pronunciation, would defy most users. I think a separate expanded museum guide by both authors on this topic should be provided. Anyone wanting a local name and its correct pronunciation would simply show local people the illustration. From my experience, many Fijians are ignorant of the names and identification of the less familiar species that are likely to interest birdwatchers.

Clunie has taken the liberty of changing the familiar English names for something more appropriate, although West Polynesian Ground Dove is a bit of a mouthful. In the section on further reading, he mentions the recent journal *Domodomo* of the Fiji Museum for articles on Fiji birds but fails to mention *Notornis*, which has been the main source of most recent observations, including Clunie's.

The descriptions are interspersed with chatty observations on behaviour, as well as descriptions of subspecies, and male, female and juvenile where necessary. Breeding knowledge, where it exists, has often been gleaned from the author's own notes, which I am pleased to see in published form. The relatively low price of this book is very much a plus, and I hope it will find its way into many local hands and schools as well as the increasing tourist market.

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