

REVIEWS

Shorebirds: an identification guide to the waders of the world by Peter Hayman, John Marchant and Tony Prater. 1986. Croom Helm Ltd., London and Sydney. 412 pages, 88 colour plates and distribution maps. UK price £19.95. Distributed in New Zealand by Benton Ross Publishers Ltd., P.O. Box 33-055, Takapuna, Auckland.

Ever since inquisitive and artistic man began to watch animals, the seasonal comings and goings of migratory birds warned or enheartened, perplexed and fascinated all who eyed them intelligently. Of the more than 200 species which are classed as waders, only a few are more or less sedentary; and at one time or another most travel and visit the seacoast or the shores of lakes and rivers. Many breed in such remote places and undertake such long journeys that even now towards the end of the 20th century few of their nests have been found and there are still many gaps in Man's accumulated knowledge of their way of life. An added complication is that the plumages of many strongly migratory species undergo spectacular colour changes both seasonally and between youth and a maturity which may come one, two or three years later.

Here we have a masterly publication which deserves to become the bible of dedicated wader-watchers across the globe; a classic in the best modern style which does for shorebirds what W. B. Alexander did for the birds of the oceans 60 years ago. Text, format, maps, cross references and indexing are all of the highest standard.

The plates at once catch the eye; an immediate excuse for hours of enchanted browsing, recalling experiences in many lands and likely to arouse an itch to travel in search of the unknown or simply to see once again and perhaps look a little more critically. Whether they be lapwings or dotterels, shanks or stints, phalaropes or pratincoles, all have been meticulously painted or sketched with consummate skill by a very gifted artist, who has studied most of his subjects in their different plumages and in their native habitats; and who with an eye for significant detail has caught the individual jizz and the subtle tones of both adults and young. An almost black-chested Pectoral (Plate 82) seems to solve the enigma of a sandpiper which puzzled Ross McKenzie and others at Miranda in November 1949. When I saw my first American Long-billed Curlew in California in March 1983, its 'yellowness' as compared with our Far-Eastern Curlews at once called for comment; a feature which is clearly illustrated in plate 83. Especially helpful too are the fine drawings which show patterns of tails and wings.

The authors are fully aware of the difficulties of identifying correctly in the field, sometimes even in the hand, the smaller closely related species. No problem is shirked and the analysis of the stints or peeps is impressively thorough.

The data on *Pluvialis* (pages 278-280; & 392 & plates 31 & 32) should stimulate our plover-lovers and rarity-seekers to examine closely any golden plovers which they may find, especially solitary birds or small parties which are obviously tired or off course. Among the 600-1000 *fulva*, rightly given

full specific status, that summer in New Zealand, are there no lost *dominica*? Is it not true that American Golden Plovers, greyer and slightly larger, have already be suspected at Farewell Spit?

Australasian ornithologists have reason to be grateful for the generous treatment which their many endemic plovers and far-travelling arctic migrants have received. One query. What is the basis for the often repeated statement that our Shore Plover was once widespread in the North Island? Is there any real evidence, archeological or corporeal? If *Thinornis* did visit the North Island in numbers, it is likely to have been before the arrival of Polynesian Man, together with kuri (dog) and kiore (rat). By the time of Captain Cook's Second Voyage, it seems to have been surviving only along a few remote South Island inlets and, of course, in the Chatham Islands.

The authors have combined to produce a specialist book which will be thumbed and treasured by all who have experienced the lure and thrill of studying shorebirds. It is just the book to have handy not only for understanding the 'common or garden' waders, but also when some exotic stranger, such as Wilson's Phalarope, Asiatic Dowitcher or Painted Snipe, miraculously appears in one's field of view.

R. B. Sibson

Penguins of the World: A Bibliography by A. J. Williams, J. Cooper, I. P. Newton, C. M. Phillips, B. P. Watkins. British Antarctic Survey, 1985. 255 pp. ISBN 0-85665-112-5. £11.50.

This bibliography lists 1942 numbered citations arranged alphabetically by senior author. There are two indexes, one to species, the other to 17 broad subject categories such as Ecology, Behaviour etc. Both fossil and living species are covered but the Royal/Macaroni and Little/White-flippered Penguins are regarded as conspecifics and hence separated in the species index.

Recent research up to and including 1984 is strongly represented but early papers containing type descriptions are deliberately omitted on the grounds that these are readily available in the 2nd (1979) Edition of Vol. 1 of Peter's 'Checklist of Birds of the World'. Also missing are many of the early notes on Penguins. For example, there are three entries for W. L. Buller but many more are listed in Mrs Oliver's *Annotated Index to Some Early Bird Literature* (1968). Similarly there is but one entry for F. W. Hutton and none of Otto Finsch's notes from the Trans. NZ Inst. is listed. On the other hand a number of popular articles, some of marginal scientific value, are included. On the credit side, the authors have listed some general works and publications with useful but mainly incidental references to penguins: such citations are often missed by 'Zoological Record' and 'Biological Abstracts'. The result is an excellent compilation that will be particularly helpful for those wishing to get into the Russian, Japanese and German literature. It is planned to update the work with supplementary lists from time to time.

John Warham