

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-flipped 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

A Field Guide to Australian Bird Song: cassette two. Bird Observers Club 1985.

This eagerly awaited second cassette in the series covers species from Rufous Night Heron to the Chestnut Rail and further extends the range of commercial recordings available on Australian birds.

It covers 69 species, including waterbirds, hawks, megapodes, quail and ends with four rails. The localities in which these recordings were made range from Nepal, Lord Howe Island, New Zealand and many widely separated localities throughout Australia with a solitary example from Great Britain. The oldest recording was made in 1958 and the most recent in February 1985.

The recordings are generally of a high standard, given the original field conditions and the great variety of recording equipment used. How Rex Buckingham and Len Jackson are able to 'clean up' recordings like the Mute Swan which has a water pump in the background defies a written description. Congratulations on a job very well done. The spoken identifications are by Len Grice. The folio that comes with this tape tells us the Latin names, the vernacular names of the species, *what the bird(s) are doing and the running time of each recording*, as well as who made the field tape and where it was made. Such data are rarely supplied with recordings these days, and so it is good to see a publication that supplies notes in a model form. At least 25 of the species on this second tape are on the New Zealand list, some like the Little Bittern being rare.

Many of the species on this tape are first releases and should create considerable interest among ornithologists for this reason alone.

Available from The Bird Observers Club, Box 185, P.O. Nunawading, Victoria 3131, Australia. Price \$A10.00. For a review of cassette one, see *Notornis* 31: 335 (1984).

L. B. McPherson

LETTER

An attempt to restore sex to the Cape Pigeon

For some time, by a quirky ruling of the International Commission for Scientific Nomenclature, this splendid petrel has borne a scientific name the gender of which is neuter.

Pintado, of which *Daption* is an anagram, is naturally pronounced with its final o long. Accordingly, if the anagram is correctly formed, it is *daptiōn*, not *daptiōn*. Thus it is allied, not with a big clutch of ancient Greek neuter nouns signifying diminutives, but with a substantial group of masculine and feminine names and nouns which end with long -ōn or -ion, e.g. *chelidon* (swallow), *aëdon* (nightingale or warbler), *halcyon* (kingfisher), *prion* (saw or sawyer). *The word prion is especially interesting and relevant. As a bird name it goes back at least to 1800; yet another proof of the sound classical learning of most 18th century naturalists. Its gender was masculine. Buller's Broad-billed Prion was vittatus; and when later a subspecies of the Antarctic Prion was named desolatus alter it was doubly masculine. But the law of*