

lines on the R. T. Peterson style. These plates are inserted in the centre of the book but a particular illustration is readily located from the text.

Not all Australia's birds are illustrated: even regular visitors like the Streaked Shearwater and Royal and Buller's Albatrosses are unrepresented, although covered in the species' accounts. For the grebes, penguins, petrels, cuckoo-shrikes, wood-swallows and magpies reliance has been placed on monochrome reproductions, but in some other groups like the ducks and waders colour plates of the birds at rest are supplemented by black and white ones of them in flight. Immature and non-breeding plumages are often shown as well as those of the breeding condition.

There are small and useful maps towards the end of the book stated to show breeding distributions, although these actually seem to depict the total Australian ranges. For example, the Australasian Gannet is shown as reaching Shark's Bay, Western Australia, whereas it is not known as a breeder in that state.

The text gives scientific and a whole range of vernacular names (some quite archaic) and, typically, 5-10 lines on field marks, 2-3 on voice, 1 on habitat, 3-6 on breeding and 2-3 on range and status. Key features are emphasised by italics, always a helpful system. The text coverage is adequate for most species but too brief and imprecise to permit identification of difficult birds like prions and diving petrels found among beach wrecks.

Peter Slater's work scores in some ways — his silhouettes of petrel and gull bills and his head-on flight outlines of raptors, for example, are valuable — but Pizzey's book, though not faultless, must now take over at least for the time being as the bird guide for Australians and for visitors to that country. Many New Zealanders will envy the Australians in having access to such an excellent work, which will also be very useful for identifying Australian strays that reach our shores. Finally, this book is excellently bound and despite its bulk should stand up well to the wear and tear of field use. In a new edition random errors should be corrected, some additional material could be worthwhile such as colour illustrations of the two giant petrels, and revisions to the non-passerine nomenclature arising since the 1975 RAOU Checklist could be incorporated.

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*The Birds of The Gambia — An annotated check-list and guide to localities in The Gambia*, by J. V. Jensen and J. Kirkeby. 1980. Aros Nature Guides.

About a quarter of this book is devoted to two introductory chapters and the rest mainly to the systemic list. The first chapter is largely a potted geography illustrated with sketch maps and diagrams; the second a description of the better known bird-watching localities with bird lists and habitat photographs; and the last the list of species with concise notes on status, habitat, breeding and range, a distribution map for each species and numerous black-and-white photographs, the majority by the authors themselves.

The book succeeds as a check-list in so far as it includes many recent records and considerably extends the number of species described for this area in previous publications. Not surprisingly a good proportion of the additions are migrants, or birds with other extensive movements, and many of the records are the authors' own. Older records, however, seem to have been only superficially researched and are often omitted. Mackworth-Praed & Grant, whose work was virtually finished by the late fifties, acknowledge about six hundred sources; Jensen and Kirkeby about a hundred and twenty, and only eight of these the fifties. Of the older classic works, Swainson's *Birds of West Africa* 1837, Hartlaub's *System der Ornithologie Westafricas* 1850, and Bates's *Handbook of the Birds of West Africa* 1930 are not mentioned in the list of references.

To my mind the check-list contains many questionable inclusions and exclusions. The Emerald Cuckoo, for example, is specifically stated by both Bannerman (1930-51) and Praed & Grant (1970) to occur in The Gambia, but is excluded here without comment. The Pink-headed Dove is excluded: "due to lack of specimens"; yet other species are admitted (no doubt justifiably) on the strength of single sight records. The Black and White-casqued Hornbill, not previously described as occurring nearer than Ghana, a true forest species conspicuously ill-equipped for long distance flight, is admitted on the strength of a single record from the wharf area! Similarly *Accipiter toussenelii* (there seems to be some confusion about its vernacular name), not elsewhere stated to occur north of lower Guinea (Brown & Amadon 1968), is included, perhaps correctly, but with no supporting evidence.

A check-list worth its salt should also be taxonomically up to date. This is an esoteric business and I can do no better than to refer to the taxonomy in current use in East and South Africa, which are probably most advanced in these matters. The discrepancies between these and the work under discussion are numerous: the Dwarf Bittern is now placed in *Ixobrychos* (not *Ardeirallus*), the Lappet-faced and Hooded Vultures are now members of the genera *Aegypius* and *Neophron* respectively (not *Torgos* and *Necrosyrtes*), Blackhead and Spur-winged Plovers are now both *Vanellus* (not *Hoplopterus*), and the Jack Snipe is *Gallinago* (not *Lymnocryptes*), to quote the first half-dozen that come to notice.

The vernacular nomenclature is often unconventional and is littered with unnecessary adjectives: *Northern* Gannet, *Great* Cormorant, *Great* White Pelican, and *Grey* Heron among the first twelve species alone. Generally this is no more than irritating, but when all the larger Plovers become Lapwings, or worse *Accipiter toussenelii* becomes the West African Goshawk (the usual vernacular for *A. macroscelodes*) instead of Red-chested Goshawk, real confusion arises.

A number of minor errors remain, presumably from carelessly corrected proofs, but not, I suspect, as many as in other books in this Danish series.

The introductory chapter presents a good concise picture of what a visitor might expect The Gambia to be like. Not enough, however, is made of its changing nature. The arid zone is extending southwards and illegal bush-burning continues on a large scale up-river, seriously affecting the ecology: many snakes, for example, have dis-

appeared from areas in which they were recently common. The second chapter on localities is excellent, and acceptable for a country where pressure on these localities due to bird-watchers is unlikely to cause significant harm.

The notes and distribution maps in the main list section are good and would surely prove useful although they are based mainly on recent information. Unlike the habitat shots, I find the bird photographs in this section, with the exception of some flight photographs showing underwing patterns, neither useful nor ornamental. They are all in monochrome and many are badly reproduced.

In conclusion, this is not a definitive check-list (the one planned by the British Trust for Ornithology for publication this year should fulfil this role), but would nevertheless prove a valuable addition to a field-guide for a first visit to this country. The bird photographs add little but cost.

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