

Seabirds of New Zealand, by Elaine Power. 1979. Auckland: Collins. 44 pp. \$9.95.

Those who liked Elaine Power's three previous books will also like this one. Like them, *Seabirds* continues to reflect the enthusiasm of an amateur field-naturalist. The paintings and sketches seem to aim at conveying the impression of birds, yet with care for detail; they are fresh, bright, and alive. As usual, some succeed (e.g. Black-backed Gull, Caspian Tern, White-faced Storm Petrel), others do not (e.g. a fault in perspective produces an apparently battleship-sized Flesh-footed Shearwater). Personally, I prefer on the whole the often charming monochrome sketches, although I don't like the kingfisher-like Caspian or the faulty tail-shape of the Black-fronted Tern. The text is brief and informative.

It would be unfair to analyse the paintings in severe ornithological criticism. The book is surely aimed mainly at public enjoyment and to be a general guide to, mostly, major species. As such it will deservedly enjoy the same popularity as the three previous books in the series. Review copy deposited in OSNZ library.

B. D. HEATHER

A field guide to the seabirds of Britain and the world, by G. S. Tuck & H. Heinzel. 1978. 292 pages; 48 plates in colour, 313 maps, 138 line drawings. Collins, London. £5.25.

It has become fashionable in recent years for some authors of bird books to take on the world. This ambitious book on the seabirds of the world is an example. Both the author, Captain Gerald Tuck, and the illustrator, Hermann Heinzel, are to be congratulated for attempting the daunting task of describing and illustrating some 303 species of seafowl, about 88 of which are albatrosses and petrels (Procellariiformes), the rest including penguins, cormorants, phalaropes and gulls.

At first sight, the reader is impressed with the book's scope, layout, binding, and production. The line drawings throughout the text are attractive, and the 16 pages devoted to world distribution maps appear useful. Closer examination of the text, however, reveals the author's difficulty with words, and many errors and inconsistencies of fact. Because of these, the book quickly becomes fogbound. On pages 14 and 15, for example, the bills of albatrosses are illustrated and described. We are told that for the Royal Albatross the cutting edges of both mandibles are black; not so, only the tomium of the upper mandible (maxilla) is black. The bill of the "Shy Albatross" is described as follows, "Bill grey, with distinct orange tip; bluish lateral plates run up in front of eye; dark horseshoe stripe behind nostril." This description is perplexing at best and wrong at worst. The bill is a pale greenish grey with a yellow (not orange) tip to both mandibles. The skin between the bill plates is dark blue, and the transverse fleshy stripe at the gape is orange. What the "bluish lateral plates" in front of the eyes are, I cannot imagine. For the Buller's Albatross, we read, "Bill greyish black, with a yellow stripe, along the upper (*sic*) and mandible." One needs a translator (or a good editor) to decipher this code. The remaining descriptions of albatrosses' beaks on page