

BOOK REVIEWS

Birds in Bass Strait, by Ken Simpson. Published for B.H.P. by A. H. & A. W. Reed Pty Ltd, Sydney, &c., 112 pp., illus., 1972, \$4.95.

Described as the first of several titles on selected Australian subjects initiated and sponsored by the Oil and Gas Division of the Broken Hill Proprietary Co. Ltd., this book will be of particular interest to New Zealand readers. Bass Strait is not in any sense a narrowly restricted region, for its sea and shorebirds are representative of the same latitudinal zone as much of the New Zealand coast. The author, who is currently a Senior Technical Officer at Monash University, Melbourne, with a comprehensive background of varied field experience in both Australia and Antarctica, has a distinctive style and approach, refreshingly free of cliché and re-hashed data. When there is good published material available he gives the relevant reference, but devotes his text mainly to original observations and to comments which are practical and stimulating. It leaves the impression that Mr Simpson has digested the available literature, but also has kept his eyes open. The quality of the text is enhanced by good concluding chapters on landbird migration, research by banding, beach-combing, specimen preservation and recording, seabird photography, bird societies and clubs, and the marine mammals. Typical of the author's style are the instructions for such emergencies as dropping your camera in the sea — "Keep it totally submerged in salt water until you get it home . . . place it in the toilet . . . and then flush ten times . . . Have a stiff whisky if you feel depressed."

The printing, lay-out, and the standard and choice of illustrations, mainly in colour, are very good indeed. It is interesting to note that, with two exceptions, all the photographers are amateurs. There are some arresting and unusual studies, such as Graeme Chapman's Greenshank (Pl. 28) and a fine series of oceanic birds on the wing by Bill Burlace. One could be tempted to ask him why the Wedge-tailed Shearwaters (Fig. 15) are not Flesh-footed Shearwaters, why the immature Black-browed Albatross (Fig. 16) is not an immature Grey-headed; or ask Michael Carter why the Eastern Common Terns in Plate 20 are not White-fronted, but they could be right, and the questions only point up the pitfalls.

This attractive book can be recommended for both reading and reference.

R. A. F.



Birds of the Antarctic and Subantarctic. By G. E. Watson, J. P. Angle, P. C. Harper, M. A. Bridge, R. P. Schlatter, W. L. N. Tickell, J. C. Boyd, and M. M. Boyd. Antarctic Map Folio Series, Folio 14. Pp. 1-18, figs 1-2, 2 maps, pls 1-15. American Geographical Society, New York, 1971, US \$10.

Dr George E. Watson, of the United States National Museum, is the senior author of this impressive publication, and his formidable list of collaborators includes one active member of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand. Published under contract with the National Science Foundation, the important distribution charts embody, along

with much earlier data, the results up to 1968 of all the ornithological work sponsored and assisted by the NSF and carried out from the USNS *Eltanin*, other vessels, and shore stations.

The overall size of 44 x 28 cm ensures that the 14 distribution charts are large enough to define the known breeding localities and recorded total distribution of some fifty taxa of birds. The difficult decision of where to draw the line in coverage has been made by plotting only those species breeding south of the Antarctic Convergence or on the islands just north of it yet clearly within its influence, such as Marion, Prince Edward, Crozet, Kerguelen and Macquarie.

An introductory section of ten pages of text includes chapters on the physical environment, distribution with accompanying tables and diagrams, followed by species accounts presented under family groupings. The discussions under this last section indicate considerable research and are generally constructive. Even a wordy recent correspondence in this Society's journal has been cited to justify not recognising records of Macaroni Penguins from Cape Hallet, Balleny Islands, and the New Zealand Subantarctic. Perhaps the excessive length of the correspondence confused the authors, for all that was at issue in it was the identification of a single specimen from the Snares: other records have not been challenged. The section is followed by a reference list of 125 titles, and the 713 data sources used in compiling the distribution charts. As the charts are large enough to carry the reference numbers legibly all the sources of records can be easily found, which is no small advantage. A few of the data derived from nineteenth century records are of doubtful accuracy, such as the acceptance of Buller's statement that *Pterodroma mollis* breeds at the Kermadec Islands, but generally the evaluation is more careful.

For good measure Plate 15 carries photographs of 31 species. The reproduction is not crisp enough to show plumage characters clearly in all of them, and at least one error of identification has slipped through, with a Giant Fulmar masquerading as a White-chinned Petrel.

The publication provides a valuable base-line for all subsequent distribution studies, while the method of analysis and of presentation sets a new and high standard.

R. A. F.



Grzimek's Animal Life Encyclopedia. Editor-in-chief, Bernhard Grzimek. New York, &c.: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1972. Vol. 7, Birds I. Tinamous to Quail. Pp. 1-580, illus.; Vol. 8, Birds II. Grouse and Pheasants to Mousebirds. Pp. 1-630, illus. Each vol. UK £10.75; US \$29.95; NZ & AUS approx. \$30 (the set c. \$390).

These are sumptuous volumes, representing two of the three proposed volumes on birds within a 13-volume set of Grzimek's *Animal Life Encyclopedia*, originally published in German in Zurich during 1968 and now appearing in English along an international production line, the type being set in Canada, printing and binding in Italy and publication in New York and London. These two volumes weight 4½ lbs each and measure some 10" x 7" x 3", the