

*Index Ornithologorum*. Edited by W. Rydzewski. Being *The Ring*, Vol. VI, Nos 71-73. Pp. iv + 1-112. Wrocaw: Polish Zoological Society. 1972. Price US \$3.

Dr W. Rydzewski, to whom we were much indebted some years ago for his imagination and effort in founding and maintaining that highly useful international bulletin of bird banding *The Ring*, has made a brave attempt to produce a "Who's Who" of the World's ornithologists. Like any other encyclopaedic volume, its success can best be judged by examining what we know in it, i.e. the comprehensiveness of the New Zealand section. Dr Rydzewski explains in his preface that: "The idea of the present Index was formed by the editor's personal need to find people with similar interests in various parts of the world. . . . The most useful part should be the Subject Index showing the principal interests in ornithology of the individual persons listed in the first part of the Index. It should facilitate the finding of pen-friends in remote parts of the world."

The *Index* is divided into two sections, as the preface indicates: Personal Index in which the following information is listed about each ornithologist: "surname, other names, year of birth, title, occupation or situation, membership of principal ornithological organisations, principal interests in ornithology, address"; Subject Index, a rather miscellaneous assortment of headings obviously derived from what those listed have said are their "principal interests." Its greatest defect, as will be shown, is that many people have said the same thing in different words or have hidden any specific interests in a general heading. Hence its usefulness is distinctly limited and its reality suspect.

The ornithologists of the world, as they appear in the *Index*, consist of 711 names representing 59 countries. Under "New Zealand" are 28 names; nearly 4% of the ornithologists in the world are New Zealanders! How comprehensive is the picture of ornithology in New Zealand (presumably a "remote part of the world") given to our overseas colleagues? For a start readers of *Notornis* may care to know what names are listed: J. A. Bartle, B. D. Bell, A. Blackburn, P. C. Bull, T. A. Caithness, D. E. Crockett, E. W. Dawson, C. A. Fleming, R. A. Fordham, J. A. Gibb, G. E. Hamel, [J.] A. F. Jenkins, F. C. Kinsky, R. B. Lavers, D. V. Merton, J. A. R. Miles, G. J. H. Moon, R. E. R. Porter, T. P. G. Purchas, B. E. Reid, C. J. R. Robertson, M. F. Soper, J. Warham, R. B. Sibson, K. E. Westerskov, P. R. Wilson, K. A. Wodzicki, E. C. Young. Surely it is not mere modesty that has prevented more of the 1,072 members of the OSNZ from being listed as "ornithologists." Of those included, 16 are professional ornithologists, 6 are professional scientists in other fields and only 6 can be said to be truly amateur. Other countries, doubtless, reveal a similar picture. I cannot believe that the single name of a bird artist living in Istanbul reflects the true state of ornithology in Turkey nor a mere two names from Italy, three from Japan and four from India. Some others helping to make the world total of 711 are: Argentina 1, Australia 42, France 22, Great Britain 61, Indonesia 1, Netherlands 26, Poland 30, South Africa 12, and USSR 105.

How useful is the subject index? Does it readily help in "the finding of pen-friends in remote parts of the world"? For the Israeli, Ethiopian or Brazilian ornithologist looking for a contact in the Soviet Union this could be an undoubted aid (with a ratio of 105 to 2, 2 and 1 respectively), particularly if the subject matter to be discussed was of no consequence. I cannot see, however, that some "remote parts" lack ornithologists simply because they are remote. The subject index, which also includes systematic groups occasionally down to generic or specific level, shows that of the 28 New Zealanders — two are interested in agricultural problems (both are employees of the DSIR's Ecology Division); none are concerned with the Anatidae or even Anseriformes, nor in "birds of prey" or "birds of islands"; but 5 are listed as being interested in "birds of New Zealand" with only one interested in "birds of the Pacific." Of world interest in "birds of the Antarctic," only 3 names are given, one each from Chile, Norway, and New Zealand; and I can say, with some authority, that the New Zealander listed would not be a very suitable pen-pal for someone in, say, Surinam or South West Africa seeking information on this topic.

Two New Zealanders are listed under "*Corvus*," both from the Ecology Division station at Havelock North. Three Australians are concerned with *Eudiptula* but apparently no one in New Zealand. World interest in sea gulls (called Laridae in the *Index*) is represented by one worker in the USSR and another in Uruguay. "Migration" hardly interests people from "down under" but is a major concern of Europeans and North Americans. Interest in the Myna is supported by a single New Zealander and only one ornithologist in the world seems concerned about oil pollution. Only three ornithologists are sufficiently interested in the genus *Passer* to list it among their interests. "Population Dynamics" and "Ringing" are fashionable branches of ornithology. Of the world's interests in the Procellariiformes, all 6 names listed are from New Zealand and similarly for the Sphenisciformes all 4 names are well-known to us.

Unhappily for would-be pen-friends, most of the world's ornithologists (at least the 711 listed here) find their interests in "Behaviour," "Breeding Biology," "Conservation and Protection," "Distribution," and similar wide subjects. Hence, one doubts that Dr Rydzewski's hope of people sharing their interests could be realised. Still, as I began to say, it is a brave, commendable and potentially useful attempt and gives some immediate help even if only to provide some fascination in finding out how old one's colleagues are!

The editor of such a compilation must obviously depend greatly on the cooperation of other ornithologists who must, themselves, make the effort of ensuring that their names are included (some New Zealanders may, perhaps, hang their heads) and, as well, he must use his own knowledge and list of correspondents (perhaps with one in each country to provide local lists); hence the 30 names from Poland contrasting with the 7 from Czechoslovakia.

If, in its first edition, the *Index Ornithologorum* is not the success we might wish, it is our fault alone. Dr Rydzewski's intentions

were widely advertised in many bird journals but it seems that there must be many who either abhor questionnaires, are unduly modest or are full of good intentions but . . . The current membership list of the American Ornithologists' Union gives 3,135 names but Dr Rydzewski has captured only 118 with many conspicuous non-recoveries. The recently published *Index to Current Australian Ornithological Research* compiled by Dr Douglas Dow for the RAOU is unsuccessful for much the same reasons.

There is, however, a lesson to be learned from a study of Dr Rydzewski's *Index*. I think that there is a need and a good use for such a compilation as this and we would wish a second edition well; but I do believe that the only way to a really adequate *Index Ornithologorum* will be for each ornithological society or bird club to publish its own membership list with a similar but more carefully-phrased statement of each member's interests. Dr Rydzewski could then compile and edit an Index of (or from) such lists geographically and cross-referenced as he thinks fit. It might be a marathon task.

The present volume will, however, be quite welcome in the hands of many ornithologists despite the limitations which I have discussed. We thank Dr Rydzewski for giving us the opportunity of commenting upon his efforts. Orders should be sent to: The Editor, "The Ring" Laboratory for Ornithology, Sienkiewicza 21, Wroław, Poland, with a bank draft for US \$3 made payable to the Polish Zoological Society.

E. W. D.