

a profound need for better guides and critical studies, such as we have had in *Notornis* on prions and the Soft-plumaged Petrel, by people who really know their seabirds, which might stress, in particular, the pitfalls awaiting the beginner or those, experienced elsewhere, who move into a new geographical area. As more research and fisheries vessels are used in local waters, further opportunities for observing at sea will come about, and much information such as the RNBWS presents will be amassed here. We must ensure as best we can that the identifications, at least, are well-founded. We may, then, be a leap ahead of the well-known seabird man and take other people's identifications without the usual grain of salt.

This *Sea Swallow* concludes with a review by "W.R.P.B." of *The Handbook of Australian Sea-birds* by Serventy, Serventy & Warham in which the reviewer has this to say: "This is one of the more important seabird publications of recent years, by three of the most experienced authorities on Australasian seabirds . . . The information provided is much more accurate and comprehensive than in some other recent books, and the authors supplied much of it themselves. . . ." One wonders what motivates the reviewer's final remarks: "It is a pity this outstanding work took a decade to be published; some more recent antipodean experts are going to find it hard to compete with it."

We congratulate the RNBWS on the celebration of its 25th Anniversary and echo the hope of the President, Admiral Sir Nigel Henderson, G.B.E., K.C.B., "that in the next 25 years the Society will go from strength to even greater strength and will continue to provide interest and enjoyment for those who participate in its work."

E. W. D.



*New Zealand water birds. An artist's journal*, by Elaine Power. Pp. [88], col. pls 22, b & w pls 20. Collins: Auckland and London, 1975. \$8.40.

This is a delightful book! What more can one say but echo the words of a reviewer of Mrs Power's first book of paintings *Small birds of the New Zealand bush* (1970): "It is hard to find words to express the delight which this book has given me." (R. J. Scarlett, *Notornis* 17: 134; 1970). Another reviewer of this first book ("R.B.S.," *Emu* 72: 37; 1972) made this prophecy: ". . . with it we may see the dawn of a new era in the perceptive portrayal of New Zealand's native birds." Mrs Power has amply fulfilled this hope not only with her later volume *Waders in New Zealand* (1971) but with this most enjoyable "artist's journal" of water bird studies. She is now firmly established as one of the leading bird painters not merely in New Zealand but on the world scene. Happily she combines an informative and accurate text with her sensitive and realistic portraits so that for overseas readers, in particular, a very fine and useful introduction to the life and appearance of many of the characteristic birds of our country is provided.

Those who know their birds will in the field will always find something to quibble about in the stance, colouration, or incongruous setting in which any bird is portrayed by an artist, whether it be by Peter Scott, Roger Tory Peterson, Chloe Talbot-Kelly, Molly Falla, Janet Marshall, or Elaine Power. Perhaps the camera does not lie

but our noted bird photographers are not immune from similar weaknesses. Any such shortcomings in Mrs Power's books will not detract from the almost indescribable pleasure they give.

The fault of *New Zealand water birds* lies only in its price. For \$8.40 you get 88 pages with 22 coloured plates and 20 black-and-white illustrations of 21 species of birds in contrast to the \$2.50 you paid in 1970 for 20 species of *Small birds* in 48 pages with 21 coloured plates and 17 b & w figures and \$3.20's worth of *Waders* in 1971 with 48 pages, 11 coloured plates, 10 b & w figures, showing 20 species. Statisticians could doubtless assure us that we are still getting value for money despite the cost-of-living adjustments, and I believe them for in *Water birds* we have not only the final, polished portraits of Mrs Power at her very best showing many of the New Zealand pond, river, and swamp birds which we know and enjoy but also an interesting array of preliminary artist's sketches which form the basis of the finished portraits. Her "Introduction" provides a special enjoyment in itself and Mrs Power would seem to have another career ahead of her as natural history writer! Those who have spent hours watching the displays and feeding behaviour of ducks will envy Mrs Power her undoubted talents in capturing so deftly the intriguing postures and stances so characteristic of this group of water birds. Those who admire the cheeky and mischievous Weka (anthropomorphism if you like) will welcome her lively sketches, and the Pukeko also endears itself further to us in her simple outlines.

Let me use R. J. Scarlett's other words about Mrs Power's first book but extend them, in gratitude, to this magnificent offering (published in good time for early Christmas shopping, and with a handy slip-case for mailing to friends): "I can think of no better book than this to give any nature-lover."

E. W. D.



*A treasury of New Zealand bird song*. Supplement No. 1. Kiwi Treasury Record No. 4. Recorded by Kenneth and Jean Bigwood. Spoken introduction by Gordon R. Williams. Kiwi Record EC-25. Wellington: Kiwi Records (A. H. & A. W. Reed). \$1.75.

This 45rpm extended play record presents 10 more birds from the collection by New Zealand's pioneer recordists Kenneth & Jean Bigwood. While some of the recordings on this disc are not up to today's standards, this is not the fault of the recordists but more the limitations of the recording equipment in use in both the field and the studio. It is a pity that this disc represents the finish of the Bigwoods' efforts in the select field of bird recording as not nearly enough is being done by anyone in this country. The disc which sells at \$1.75 has a twelve page booklet enclosed and presents the following ten birds:

North I. Kiwi  
N.Z. Falcon  
Pukeko  
Shining Cuckoo  
Kingfisher

Whitehead  
Pipit  
Brown Creeper  
Silvereye  
Black Swan

Most New Zealand ornithologists who are interested in field identification would find this disc of some help as most of the species can be named without seeing the actual bird.

L. B. McP.