

recent studies mainly from members of the Wildlife Service. The colour photographs are less successful, the whites in my copy having acquired a pinkish tinge in printing.

For those requiring a concise survey of the condition of birds in modern New Zealand this book is thoroughly recommended.

J. W.

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This book is not an identification guide, but a collection of essays by some of our most experienced ornithologists. I. A. E. Atkinson writes on the importance of bird habitats, emphasising the need for conserving them. R. B. Sibson discusses our unique forest and mountain birds, viewing them by regions throughout New Zealand, while P. C. Bull describes the relationship between birds and man, expounding the major ecological changes that have taken place. Gamebirds and their histories are presented by T. A. Caithness. H. R. McKenzie summarises information on our indigenous and migratory waders, while F. C. Kinsky and C. J. R. Robertson relate New Zealand's oceanic position to the host of seabirds frequenting the adjacent seas. Extinct species, and those in danger of extinction are enumerated by D. G. Medway, while Sir Robert Falla unifies and emphasises the themes of the previous essays with a chapter on rare birds and conservation.

This volume contains a wealth of material useful both to the new chum and the naturalist of wider experience. However, some statements raise queries: there is reference to nine breeding species of Terns, and three stragglers found in the New Zealand region — where are the three arctic migrants? But details such as these are noticed only by the very critical reader.

Unfortunately, there are lapses in the reproduction, both of plates and of text, some colour plates especially being badly out of register and some lines of text being merely hinted at. Despite this, it is enlightening to see several fresh photographs, previously unpublished in popular works on New Zealand ornithology.

An index might have been a helpful addition. However, these are insignificant drawbacks when one considers the diversity of essential background information, from which one can gain new ideas.

This compact little volume most certainly deserves a place in the bookshelves of all who appreciate our natural history, and who are seeking more information with a view to its preservation.

T. G. L.

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The Dictionary of Birds in Colour, by Bruce Campbell. London: Michael Joseph. 352 pp., 1008 col. illus. NZ \$13.10.

The bulk of this large book consists of well-produced colour photographs. It aims to be a picture dictionary of birds and nearly one eighth of the world's birds are illustrated. There is also a substantial text summarising the main characteristics of birds, their classification and anatomy, followed by succinct diagnoses of each

of the 154 families into which modern birds are classified. Then follow 150 pages of colour photographs of individual species set out in scientific order and with up to eight pictures per page. Hence most of the pictures are small — often measuring only about $3\frac{1}{2} \times 2\frac{1}{2}$ inches. The main dictionary section now follows, containing brief descriptions of the distribution, habits and habitats of some 1100 birds. The entries are arranged alphabetically by scientific name but common names are also included. For example, the information on the Kaka is found under *Nestor meridionalis* while under “Kaka” the reader is cross-referred to the entry under the scientific name.

Understandably, the photographs seem to have been selected to show the main anatomical features and plumage characters and are usually straightforward portraits. Many fine examples of nature photography are included, although because of their generally small size as reproduced, their impact is lessened. Most of the pictures are of wild animals in their natural surroundings, but there are also a lot of captives photographed against plain blue or green backgrounds or against vegetation “dollied-up” to look as though the birds were taken in the wild. This might be acceptable with little-photographed birds from South America, but it seems quite unnecessary for common Europeans like the Hawfinch and Greenfinch which have been well photographed wild and free many times. The captive birds — which include not only finches, but humming birds, parrots and a host of South Americans — tend to look artificial (particularly when we are presented with incongruities like Gouldian Finches from Northern Australia perched amid conifers!) although their diagnostic features are usually well shown. A minority of the photographs are poor. These are mostly of rare species but it is surprising that the publishers weren't able to find better pictures of common birds like the Gannet and Red-legged Partridge.

The text gives a wealth of information, mostly accurate, particularly for the northern hemisphere species. Some entries however, are quite out of date — perhaps not surprisingly in view of the vast range of species whose biology Dr Campbell has attempted to summarise. And although so many birds are described, many whole genera are omitted — 28 of those found in New Zealand, for example. These include genera like *Thinornis* (the Wrybill) containing only a single member, but also others like *Procellaria* with four members in New Zealand and *Oceanodroma* which has about seven members world-wide, so that the coverage is by no means as encyclopaedic as might at first appear. Despite its rather minor faults this book would be useful for someone seeking a broad, non-technical reference work covering a wide range of the world of birds.

J. W.

