

*Hong Kong Birds* by G. A. C. Herklots, 2nd edition, 1974. South China Morning Post Ltd., Hong Kong. Pp. XXVI-333, 18 pls.

The Colony of Hong Kong, situated in south-east China, comprises the island of Hong Kong, the New Territories peninsula and several smaller islands approximately 1000 sq. kms. in total area. The geographical location of the Colony in latitude 22°15'N places it just within the tropics and appears admirably located on the path of many Palearctic migrants on their Spring and Autumn passages.

The author spent twenty years in the Colony from 1928-48 at a time when little was known of the birds of southern China and this revised edition of an earlier work is a compilation of his notes and avian articles from the *Hong Kong Naturalist*. In recent years the author has revisited the Colony and also spent time in the Bird Room at the British Museum (Natural History), London, studying museum specimens from southern China to aid in the updated descriptions.

This volume is designed as a companion volume to the author's *The Birds of Hong Kong, Field Identification and Field Note Book* (1952).

An introduction is given outlining the history of bird study in southern China and the author's trials and tribulations in the Colony during the war years. A list of the few available references to Asian avifauna is provided, along with a comprehensive glossary of terms encountered in the text. Three hundred and sixty-eight birds are described, the text being arranged in systematic order with some variation according to *A New Dictionary of Birds* edited by Sir A. Landsborough Thomson.

For each species, the scientific name, vernacular name and race are given, also range, the status within the Colony and a full description of the bird with emphasis on features most helpful in identification.

Following the description, the author has given his observations and details from other published material on sightings, habitat, breeding behaviour and other relevant information; some more culinary than ornithological e.g. "... eagles eggs are valuable to the Chinese for their remarkable medicinal properties and the adults are also eaten."

Nine of the plates and forty-two line drawings are by A. M. Hughes which are useful when used with the text, although some of the paintings appear somewhat stylized and no scale is used. The rest of the plates are photographs of localities in the Colony showing various habitats available to birds.

Too often the work and knowledge of an experienced bird watcher fails to become known outside his immediate area of operations. However, in this case, Herklot's notes and observations have been produced in a most readable and informative volume providing an important contribution to our knowledge of the birds of Asia which may be especially welcomed by some of the many New Zealanders who visit Hong Kong.

J. F. C.