

## REVIEW.

A Systematic List of the Birds of Western Australia, by H. M. Whittell, O.B.E., and D. L. Serventy, Ph.D.; Special Publication No. 1, Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery of Western Australia; Perth, 1948. 10/- (Aust.).

How many bird species are common to Western Australia and New Zealand? The reviewer intended to list the names adopted by Whittell and Serventy for birds occurring in New Zealand, but this proved impracticable when he found that 119 species are common to the two areas if the handful of Australian species introduced to New Zealand are included. This amounts to nearly half the species on the New Zealand list even when this is swelled by introduced birds not in Western Australia. So much for our vaunted highly endemic fauna! The comments that follow are an attempt to pick items of greatest interest to New Zealand students from a 126-page booklet that lists the 432 species of the Western Australian bird fauna.

The authors state that "where it is considered that further research is required before other geographic races can be accepted . . . , they have not been indicated . . ." which "does not imply that variation does not exist, only that, at present, evidence to that effect is not considered satisfactory." This accounts for the listing of many species without subspecies, including (to quote a few New Zealand species) *Oceanites oceanicus*, *Puffinus carneipes*, *Pterodroma macroptera*, *P. lessoni*, *Daption capensis*, the Prions, *Diomedea exulans* (and other albatrosses), *Phalacrocorax sulcirostris*, *Microcarbo melanoleucos*, *Sula serrator*, *Sterna nereis*, many Arctic migrant waders, *Botaurus poiciloptilus*, *Anas rhynchotis* and *Halcyon sanctus*. (In this review, the scientific names follow Whittell and Serventy and vernacular names are mostly omitted, for brevity.)

The following items are to be noted as innovations to New Zealand literature; some follow Mayr's recent works: *Porzana tabuensis plumbea* is used for southern Australian and Tasmanian as well as for New Zealand birds; our pukeko becomes a subspecies of *Porphyrio porphyrio*; N.Z. and Australian great crested grebes are grouped as *Podiceps cristatus australis*, *Pelagodroma marina marina* is used for the Tristan and Australian populations of white-faced storm-petrel, with the name *dulciae* as a synonym. *Puffinus assimilis assimilis* is used to include Western Australian birds previously called *tunneyi*. *Pachyptila turtur* includes *crassirostris* (by implication) and *P. belcheri* is recorded as breeding on Kerguelen and Bouvet Islands, the latter a new locality quoted without reference to its authority. *Phalacrocorax carbo novae-hollandiae* (which escaped being written *novae hollandiae* by accident) includes New Zealand black shags (*steadii*). The darter becomes *Anhinga rufa novae hollandiae*. (This strict adherence to original orthography may be correct but becomes clumsy when it leads to such combinations as *Anthus novae seelandiae novae seelandiae* for the N.Z. pipit.) New Zealand Caspian terns are included in *Hydroprogne caspia strenua*, the Australian subspecies, but Australian and Tasmanian little bitterns and grey teal take the subspecific names given by Potts and Buller to New Zealand birds (*novae seelandiae* and *gracilis* respectively). The grey-backed and western silvereyes of previous classifications are combined as subspecies of *Zosterops australasiae* Vieillot, which will include our New Zealand silvereyes if this arrangement is accepted.

The authors have made many decisions which the compilers of the proposed new check-list of New Zealand birds will have to face up to. For this and other purposes, the Western Australian list will be an invaluable reference book.—C.A.F.