

Recent ornithological publications

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ARLOTT, N. **Birds of the Palearctic: Passerines. (Collins Field Guide.)** 240 pages, 80 coloured plates featuring 800 species and 705 distribution maps. London: Harper Collins, 2007. Hardback, £25.00, ISBN 0 00 714705 8 and 978 0 00 714705 2.

Since 1959, Charles Vaurie's *The Birds of the Palearctic: Passeriformes* has been one of my chief bird bibles, but how many times have I wished for it to be illustrated ... 48 years on, Norman Arlott serves that need, presenting in a slim little volume portraits of all the Palearctic passerines, of which there are about 720 indigenes and 80 vagrants. Each featuring 5–14 species, the plates depict mainly adults in breeding plumage and male examples of distinctive races. Inevitably, the images are small, but Arlott's customary clarity of feather contour and colour is not lost. My only frown concerned the inking of some plates; in particular, leaf warblers *Phylloscopus* and goldcrests *Regulus* inhabit a strange twilight in the review copy.

Set opposite the plates are the species texts, written under the headings of field notes, song, call, habitats and races. With space allowing only 40–120 words, the compression is usually severe and thus the content of the texts falls short of today's expected standard in field identification. The author-cum-artist's expressed hope in most cases that 'the illustrations will be all that is needed to identify a specific bird' expects in many cases far too much of his reader and viewer.

The book's last third displays distribution maps made by Richard Sale. They show the summer, winter and resident ranges of 705 indigenes. Again, a tight discipline of 12 maps to a small page means a small scale. Even with a magnifying glass, I failed to find several of the tiny dots of really localized species. One large error occurs in the Long-tailed Shrike *Lanius schach*; it has somehow acquired the European range of the Lesser Grey Shrike *L. minor*.

I have a last wince. The publisher presumably wishes the book to be a substitute for regional field guides, but this attempt should not be aided by blatantly excessive claims

for its contents. All plumages of each species are *not* illustrated, as rightly noted by the artist, and the indications on the maps of how common each species is are invisible. Naughty, Collins!

Given all the efforts that have been poured into this book, I have hated finding fault with it. At only £25, it is a rare bargain for what it delivers, but it will be best used as a key to the adult appearances and ranges of Palearctic passerines.

Ian Wallace

BERGMANN, H.-H., KRUCKENBERG, H. & WILLE, V. *Wilde Gänse*. 108 pages, 132 colour photographs, 3 maps. Karlsruhe: G. Braun Buchverlag, 2006. Hardback, €26.80, ISBN 978-3-7650-8321-1.

'Wild Geese: travellers between wilderness and pasture' is the full title of this slim but attractively produced volume, the latest in a series on birds aimed at interested lay people, which, through the unusual combination of a rather 'coffee-table' layout and expert authors, can also be read with profit by ornithologists. Hans-Heiner Bergmann is one of Europe's leading goose specialists, while his two co-authors are also long-term members of his goose research group.

The aim of the work is set out in the introduction: how best to protect geese by reducing or eliminating various conflicts with humans, and to explain, especially to those who might live in goose wintering quarters in northern Germany, why the birds need our protection and how the problems associated with their presence can be solved to everyone's satisfaction. In sharp contrast to other birds of the open countryside, wintering geese have benefited from recent agricultural changes through increased grazing opportunities. They quickly adapt to new crops such as maize or rape and new arable practices such as winter cereals, so have gradually shifted from grazing on salt marsh or pasture to arable land. Thus, conflicts with farmers are inevitable. A feature in Germany that can lead to some difficulties (for local people as well as geese) is the phenomenon of 'Gänsetouristen', car- and coachloads of birdwatchers, photographers and nature lovers who wish to experience the spectacle of tens of thousands of grazing geese. But the worst of new disturbances are wind turbines; where many are together in wind farms geese will abandon the area. Another problem is illegal hunting, often involving western 'tourists', in the birds' breeding areas. Some model projects are described in detail.

Framing this central core of the book's 19 chapters (some consisting of only one page of text and one large photograph) are others on goose biology, including, of course, one on the work of Konrad Lorenz, as well as treatments of each species (containing good accounts of the latest species splits) and introduced members of the Anserinae.

There is a map showing where nine goose species breed, both in the Arctic and in western Europe, but only one showing their principal over-wintering areas in northern Germany, and none illustrating migration routes or winter-

ing grounds in other northwest European countries. The matter is dealt with well in the species sections, but a map would have been a useful aid. In such a richly illustrated work (full-colour photographs throughout), a map or two and some graphics would have been simple additions.

One of the longest chapters is a very detailed one on radical attempts to halt the drastic population decline of the endangered Lesser White-fronted Goose *Anser erythropus*, the principal cause of which appears to be the large number shot during migration over Russia and eastern Europe. The idea is to train birds from the now very small north Scandinavian population to adopt an entirely new, safer wintering area to the southwest, on the Rhine near the Dutch–German border. In combination with releases into the wild in northern Scandinavia, the technique of imprinting young birds on the pilots of microlight aircraft, then simply leading them to their new winter quarters, has yielded some positive results.

The book ends with a short literature list containing German, Dutch and English titles, but the majority are popular, even children's books. A longer list would not frighten the general reader away but would help someone with previous knowledge to follow up some of the interesting and important points raised in this useful publication.

Brian Hillcoat

BLACK, J.M., PROP, J. & LARSSON, K. *Wild Goose Dilemmas*. 254 pages, many figures (photographs, graphs, line drawings). Groningen: Branta Press, 2007. Paperback, €27.00, £18.50, ISBN 978-90-811501-1-8. Contact email: info@brantapress.nl

This book's subtitle is: 'Population consequences of individual decisions in barnacle geese'. It is directly aimed at students, and is, indeed, required reading for those taking the Waterfowl Ecology and Management course at Humboldt State University (California, USA), where the senior author is Chair of the Department of Wildlife. The first two authors researched the Barnacle Geese *Branta leucopsis* of the Svalbard–Solway population for their PhDs as part of the long-running study of this population by the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust and Groningen University, The Netherlands. The third author has studied the geese belonging to the Russian–NW European population.

The authors explore the choices (equals evolutionary trade-offs) that individual geese have to make regarding, for example, food, mates, migration, breeding and parental care. They regard these choices as 'dilemmas', hence this book's title. Adding together all the choices made by all the individuals in a population dictates what happens to that population, whether it is successful and increases in numbers and/or range, or whether it is unsuccessful and declines. With the Barnacle Goose as their model, the authors examine the link between individual and population behaviour.

The study populations and study sites are described, together with the many research techniques used, then the first major topic is pair formation and mate selection. There are strong bonds between mates and within families in this species, the adults pairing for life and the young staying with their parents for up to 11 months. The effect of such bonds on both the parents and their offspring is explored in depth. Not only did goslings staying with their parents the longest have a higher survival, but the parents which hung on to their goslings the longest were more likely to breed successfully the following year. Such relationships may, indeed, explain the evolution of extended parental care in wild geese.

Subsequent chapters explore, among other subjects, body size, the food of the geese and how they exploit it, survival and reproduction, the annual cycle, and population. A final chapter looks at the large-scale use of agricultural land by wintering Barnacle Geese and the consequences of the differing nutritional benefits of fertilized grass over saltmarsh grassland (the birds' natural winter habitat), as well as discussing the conflict with farming which this feeding preference has created. Every chapter closes with a summary and conclusions, together with details of the statistical tests applied to the included tables and graphs. For several chapters, there is also a discussion of unanswered questions, either promising lines of research already underway or projects which might be initiated.

Although the book is aimed at students, the authors also recommend that habitat and wildlife managers might learn from the studies described how the response of birds, not just geese, to management practices will vary according to the proportions of a given population which have the necessary attributes to respond to those practices. I would further recommend it as a fascinating review of how a very detailed long-term study of a single species can produce valuable, and thought-provoking, results, which are much more widely applicable.

Malcolm Ogilvie

BOULET, M. & NORRIS, D.R. (eds) **Patterns of Migratory Connectivity in Two Nearctic-Neotropical Songbirds: New Insights from Intrinsic Markers. (Ornithological Monographs, no. 61.)** viii + 88 pages, maps and other figures, tables. Washington, DC: American Ornithologists' Union, 2006. Paperback, \$10.00, ISBN 0-943610-69-9.

'Migratory connectivity', for those who are not familiar with the term, is defined in the first sentence of this latest AOU monograph as, 'the degree to which two or more periods of the annual cycle are geographically linked'. In other words, if birds that breed in a given area winter in the same general area, then they exhibit high connectivity. If birds that breed in a given area do not winter in the same general area, then they exhibit low (or no) connectivity. This monograph explores the migratory connectivity of two New World songbirds: Yellow Warbler *Dendroica petechia* and American Redstart *Setophaga ruticilla*.

There are four parts to this monograph, namely an introduction and three main chapters. The Introduction introduces the concept of migratory connectivity and discusses how it was studied pre- and post-1996. Prior to 1996, most data on migratory connectivity came from morphological examination of specimens as well as from banding data. After 1996, there has been an increase in the use of intrinsic markers (primarily stable isotopes and DNA analyses). There is also a good summary of different patterns of migration (e.g. chain migration, leap-frog migration, cross-wise migration).

Chapter 2 discusses migratory connectivity in American Redstarts and describes how deuterium (a stable isotope of hydrogen) obtained from the tail-feathers shows that Redstarts engage in chain migration (i.e. breeding and non-breeding ranges are at the same longitude). Chapter 3 discusses how three types of markers [mtDNA, stable isotopes (deuterium ratios) and banding records] can be combined to explore the migratory connectivity in Yellow Warbler. This chapter is by far the largest and comprises approximately half of the monograph. Finally, Chapter 4 ('Perspectives on migratory connectivity') summarizes some of what is currently known about migratory connectivity in the two migrant passerines discussed. There is also a valuable discussion of the pros and the cons of using intrinsic markers (primarily DNA and stable isotope ratios) to explore migratory connectivity in other bird species.

Overall, this monograph does a good job of summarizing some of the recent advances in studying migratory connectivity. The final chapter is particularly useful for people who may be considering using stable isotopes in their research (although it would have been better to discuss the use of other stable isotopes in addition to deuterium), and it also has a nice section on ideas for future research into migratory connectivity. I recommend this monograph to anyone who has an interest in recent advances in the topic.

Christopher J. Butler

BURTON, R. **Aig an Oir. At the Edge – Scotland's Atlantic Oakwoods.** 167 pages, many illustrations. Peterborough, UK: Langford Press, 2005. Hardback, £35.00, ISBN 1-904078-18-4. Website: www.langford-press.co.uk

This book from Langford Press, illustrated by the Society of Wildlife Artists and with text by Robert Burton, draws attention to the wonderful oakwoods of western Scotland (sites in Argyll and Skye) by presenting work from Society members together with bursary winners and local artists, 43 of whom spent a week or more there. The result is a magnificent, sometimes surrealistic collection of work that is enormously varied, not only in terms of media used (watercolours, oils, aquatints, pastels, acrylics, etc.) but also of subjects (scenes, plants, animals and insects). Among the birds illustrated are watercolour and pencil sketches of White-tailed Eagles *Haliaeetus albicilla* (by Darren Woodhead), while Ravens *Corvus corax* attracted several artists.

The Atlantic oakwoods under scrutiny here also include much birch *Betula* spp. and are remnants of the great Caledonian Forest, more familiar to many for its Scots Pines *Pinus sylvestris* in Speyside. Much of it was destroyed by overgrazing, the collapse of charcoaling (with its associated coppicing) and competition with Sitka Spruce *Picea sitchensis* and rhododendrons. The restoration of these little-visited woods to a more natural state by the removal of conifers and planting native trees (from local seed), together with the revitalizing of the scattered rural communities by promoting tourism and improving footpath access in the woods, represents a major initiative by the Forestry Commission, government, other landowners and funding bodies.

These woods, a scarce habitat in Europe, are nationally important sites for rare lichens, butterflies and much else besides. *Aig an Oir* highlights their conservation and cultural value and succeeds admirably in conveying their atmosphere, wealth of life and beauty.

Leo Kinlen

CIEŚLAK, M. & DUL, B. **Feathers: Identification for Bird Conservation.** 320 pages, 259 colour photographs of feathers of 60 European species, mainly raptors, 24 tables. Warsaw, Poland: Natura Publishing House (www.naturapublishing.eu), 2006. Hardback, £25.99, ISBN 83-924410-0-1 and 978-83-924410-0-7. Distributor: NHBS Environment Bookstore (www.nhbs.com)

This is a practitioner's book, which has developed from a book first published to provide Polish foresters with a guide to help them to identify feathers, and consequently the presence, of species afforded special protection within their forests. It has short introductory chapters on the use of feathers in the conservation and study of birds, basic information on feathers, materials and methods. The meat of the book is the photographic guide. The colour reproduction is good and, for each species, all of the primaries and a selection of secondaries and tail-feathers are presented, along with examples of the variation in feather coloration found for the species. The photographs are not all to the same magnification, but the feathers are presented on a common background with a scale. Feather dimensions are also summarized in a table in each section. The guide covers 28 European diurnal raptors, and sensibly includes common confusion species such as Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus* and Curlew *Numenius arquata*. It also covers ten owls (Strigiformes), and European Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus*, storks *Ciconia*, Common Crane *Grus grus*, herons (Ardeidae), woodland grouse (Tetraonidae), Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedipnemus* and other confusion species. The coloured index tabs help speed the finding of particular species groups and the hard covers mean that the book will be well placed in the work vehicle rather than on the office shelf.

Has this guide gone far enough? Yes and no. It would be extremely helpful to have more guides of this kind covering a wider range of species. It could, however, have

included some contour feathers and been more comprehensive: it does not always draw attention to all the species which can be sexed using feathers, e.g. Long-eared Owl *Asio otus* (Baker, K. 1993. *Identification guide to European Non-passeriformes*. BTO Guide 24). An annoying feature is not to show the base of the quills in the photographs – many lack the basal 2 cm; this should be rectified in future volumes (further publications, on European owls and diurnal raptors, are planned), as, for just a few species, this can be a critical distinguishing feature, e.g. between Eurasian Jackdaw *Corvus monedula* and Red-billed Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*.

Should you get a copy? Yes, if you are a land-manager or fieldworker who regularly has to identify the main flight-feathers when you have not seen the bird, or not yet identified its nest-site. For the species covered it is certainly an advance on *Tracks and signs of the birds of Britain and Europe* (Brown, R. *et al.* 2003). Perhaps the best indication of its usefulness came when I showed the review copy to a forester colleague and within an hour he had ordered a copy!

David Jardine

CLEWS, B. **Birds in a Village. A Century on.** 132 pages, many sepia and colour photographs. Old Basing, Hampshire, UK: WILDGuides Ltd, 2006. Hardback, £14.50 from WILDGuides Ltd, PO Box 680, Maidenhead, Berkshire SL6 9ST (sales@wildguides.co.uk), ISBN 1-903657-15-6.

The writings of W.H. Hudson in the late 19th and early 20th centuries were undoubtedly significant in changing public attitudes towards wildlife. Some ornithologists, then seeking more scientific approaches, were uncomfortable about his anthropomorphic descriptions of bird behaviour and somewhat florid style. They also disliked his naming enthusiasts 'bird lovers'. Yet Hudson attracted a wide popular readership, and his positive influence cannot be challenged. His close involvement with the creation of the fledgling RSPB was a critical reason for its early success.

Brian Clews has lived for many years in the same Thames-side village (Cookham) where Hudson had summered some hundred years ago. Those sojourns led to the publication, in 1893, of the original *Birds in a Village*, Hudson's first book about English birds (see: Shrubsall, D. 2006. *The unpublished letters of W.H. Hudson, the first literary environmentalist 1841–1922*). In this book, Clews has the bright idea of interspersing Hudson's chapters with his own studies of this area. This works well, for the two have similar outlooks in many ways. Hudson raged about the lack of concern for birds. His main targets were taxidermy, shooting and killing, collecting eggs, destroying nests, and keeping captive birds in cages. Few of these problems continue today, but there are new targets for Clews to attack. Housing and industrial developments have occurred at a great pace, eating up the countryside. An open space the villagers in Cookham once much enjoyed has been bisected by a motorway. Changing agricultural needs cause constant problems

for wildlife. Wide areas of previously valuable habitats have been taken up for pastimes such as golf. The list continues. The message of conservation has grown louder, but still has a limited voice when confronted by human demands. As Clews notes, 'wild creatures continue to be regarded as of less importance than commercial gain and "entertainment"'. Unfortunately, several species mentioned in detail by Hudson can no longer be found in the village; these include the Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos*, Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia*, Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*, Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*, Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur* and Wood Warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*.

Both authors have shown keen interest in bird behaviour, having time to 'stand and stare' to understand more. Their findings suggest that the lifestyle of local birds has changed but a little over the century. For example, the birds still sing the same songs, make the same nests, and their varied responses to raptors are much as before. They do have the ability to search for food, which has attracted them to gardens, but how long will it take them all to understand the dangers of cars? This book incidentally produces a reminder of differing social times: while Hudson wrote of 'rustics', 'old dames' and 'cockneys', Clews describes with great disdain the importers of wild creatures as pets.

Revisiting the village after another century, as suggested by Clews, could be a fascinating project.

John Brucker

CONSTANTINE, M. & THE SOUND APPROACH (ROBB, M. & VAN DEN BERG, A.B.) **The Sound Approach to Birding: A Guide to Understanding Bird Sound.** 192 pages, 162 sonagrams, 6 oscillograms, 63 colour photographs and 9 colour sketches. Two 99-track stereo audio CDs, total playing time 2 hours 32 minutes. Poole, Dorset, UK: *The Sound Approach*, 2006. Hardback, £29.95 (orders: www.lush.co.uk), ISBN 90-810933-1-2 and 978-90-810933-1-6.

In 2000, the authors embarked on a project to record 'all the sounds of birds in the Western Palearctic'. Dick Forsman and Killian Mullarney have assisted in this ambitious undertaking and, at the time of publication, 42 countries had been visited and about 30 000 sound recordings made. Over the course of ten chapters, the authors make the case that, during field observation, a birder's ears can be every bit as valuable as the eyes and 222 of their recordings are used to illustrate and support this.

Areas covered include an introduction to basic acoustic terminology, how to interpret sonagrams and use them to identify and separate species and the effects of the habitat and climatic conditions on sound transmission. The recordings were made using either omni-directional microphones or a parabolic reflector and the resulting differences in quality are compared. The ontogeny of song is discussed and examples of subsong and plastic song are provided. There are sections on vocal sex differences, song matching, mimicry, mixed singing and dialect. The latter chapters

discuss how an analysis of call structure can contribute to the debate on taxonomically challenging groups and how sounds can be the first indicator of previously unrecognized taxonomic divisions, with consequent implications for conservation. There is a short chapter on the pros and cons of playback and human imitation to attract or interact with birds in the field.

The recordings are of a high standard overall and some are exceptional. They are also all in glorious stereo, adding to their realism and to the listener's sense of 'being there'. Most usefully, the abundant annotated sonagrams have all been made from recordings appearing on the supplied CDs, so they can be studied whilst the sounds are heard, an invaluable asset to novices when learning how to interpret sonagrams. Once this skill has been mastered, having the appropriate sonagram to hand is highly advantageous in drawing attention to subtle aspects of call structure that would otherwise go unheard.

Criticisms are minor when compared with the work's overall high quality. Where harmonics are described, those with twice the frequency of the fundamental should be referred to as the second, not the first harmonic. Whilst describing sonagrams of crossbill *Loxia* excitement calls (vocalizations of this genus are discussed in great detail on pages 149–163), there is a cryptic comment that some show 'a few strange phenomena' containing bands of sound that 'are not true harmonics'. Unfortunately, this is not followed up with a discussion of the ability of many bird species to utter two (or less commonly more) simultaneous but harmonically unrelated sounds. These are often encountered on sonagrams and an understanding of this capability is vital for correct interpretation. Particularly striking in this context is the trumpet call of the Northern Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula pyrrhula* (e.g. CD2 track 93), which has a remarkable structure with several such concurrent, harmonically unrelated components.

For those inspired by this publication, a useful addition would either have been some advice on how to start making sound recordings and sonagrams, or the inclusion of contact details for an organization such as the Wildlife Sound Recording Society.

The Sound Approach to birding has a relaxed, humorous and easy-to-read style, combining scientific theory, practical field experience and anecdote. All birders who 'don't do calls' or who take fright at the first glimpse of a sonagram would be well advised to read it. They should find it a revelation.

William Seale

FORSHAW, J.M. **Parrots of the World: an Identification Guide.** Illustrated by Frank Knight. 172 pages, 120 colour plates, colour maps for all species, a few line drawings. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2006. Hardback, \$65.00, £41.95, ISBN 978-0-691-09251-5 and 0-691-09251-6.

When Juniper & Parr published *Parrots: a Guide to the Parrots of the World* (reviewed in *Ibis* 140: 706), they cleverly

promoted its use by customs officers, submitted it for the British Library's McColvin Medal for an outstanding work of reference, and – against stiff opposition – won. Almost a decade later comes a book that might stake a further claim to the prize, for this work is even more tailored to the key questions of parrot ID. Forshaw himself, condensing recent editions (1989 and 2002, respectively) of his magnificent *Parrots of the World* and *Australian Parrots*, states that his prime motive here is conservation.

His introduction to issues involving habitat loss, agricultural conflicts and the international pet trade is solid, clear and compelling. So too is his rejection of the phylogenetic species concept, although he adopts a recent disaggregation of the *Pyrhura picta/leucotis* complexes into a small multitude of semi-lookalikes while unheeding the long South African campaign to upgrade to species status *Poicephalus (robustus) robustus*. Main texts on Old and New World species respectively sandwich the plates and maps, the species accounts providing lucid notes on range, habitats, status, behaviour, voice, similar species and 'suggested localities' for observations. Layout and typography of these accounts are poor: a line-space separates species, but each heading and subheading is in same-size capitals, with no eye-catching bold; bold is used to introduce genera, but then not even a line-space is allowed, so that genus texts abut those of preceding species! Moreover, for an ID guide, this material might better have been compressed into facing-page notes alongside the plumage descriptions that accompany the plates (thereby also avoiding some repetition).

The artwork is robust, life-like and well organized for comparisons. Its plain consistency of treatment trumps the patchwork styles in Juniper & Parr. If coloration (body feathers of *Amazona imperialis*, crown of *Pyrhura pfrimeri*) is sometimes awry, presentation and treatment are admirable, with many subspecies illustrated. The maps sensibly use contrasting hues to distinguish subspecies, but occasionally stray: that for *Psittacus erithacus timneh* is wrong, the coloured strip for *Amazona kawalli* should cover the Amazon River, and anyone who might be amused by maps plotted from scant data should compare those for *Forpus sclateri* in Forshaw's *Parrots of the World* (1989, p. 525) Juniper & Parr (p. 485), the *Handbook of the Birds of the World* (4: 450) and here (plate 93) – one hopes the latest is the likeliest.

If brief items in the magazine *PsittaScene* and an obscure taxonomic note on *Polytelis anthoepplus* can turn up in the references, why not a major study like that on *Amazona kawalli* in *Ararajuba* (5 [1997]: 97–113) or the names of recent students such as Brightsmith, Ekstrom, Koenig, Masello, Miyaki, Reinschmidt, Renton, Salaman and Symes? More immediately relevant, perhaps, is whether this is really an identification guide. Will anyone but the most driven of psittaholics – if such people exist – schlep this tome into the field? No matter: the book is up to date on essentials (it includes *Aratinga [solstitialis] pintoii*, described early in 2005), and will sell in spades on account

of the comparability of the plates (good for customs officers!) and the inspirational cachet of the author – and, on balance, deservedly so.

N.J. Collar

GERRARD, C. **The Great Fen. Artists for Nature in England.** 167 pages, many illustrations. Peterborough, UK: Langford Press, 2006. Hardback, £35.00, ISBN 1-904078-13-3 and 978-1-904078-13-5.

In this lavish book, the Artists for Nature Foundation (founded 1990) publicize Britain's most ambitious habitat restoration project – to link the National Nature Reserves of Woodwalton Fen and Holme Fen, which are about 5 km apart, and acquire surrounding land so that water-levels in the fens can be controlled, the flooding of farmland prevented and the deterioration of the reserves halted. Known as the Great Fen project, the restoration of 3000 ha of land lying between Peterborough and Huntingdon in the lowest part of England to save the reserves and create new habitats (peat bog, standing water, wet grassland and forest) is a staggering plan and only possible through the involvement of English Nature [Natural England], the Environment Agency and many other bodies. The time-scale envisaged is necessarily lengthy and may be a century.

Some 30 artists from Britain and six other countries show here something of the range of habitat, insects, plants, water-life and birds in the area. Many different art forms are used, including arresting sculptures in scrap-metal by Harriet Mead, of Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*, newt and dragonfly. Denis Clavreul and others also present evocative illustrations of fenland people and their farms. All the expected birds are represented, including several studies of Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*, Hobby *Falco subbuteo* and Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*. At the end of the book, Vadim Gorbатов's watercolour sketches of Cranes *Grus grus* in flight point towards a long-term hope for the project.

The text by Chris Gerrard brings out the importance of Charles Rothschild, not only in preserving Woodwalton Fen, but in the founding in 1913 [not 1919 as stated] of the Society for the Promotion of Nature Reserves, for this eventually led to the creation of a government department for nature conservation.

This delightful book communicates the spirit of the Great Fen and it will surely inspire further support for an immense project.

Leo Kinlen

GILLMOR, R. **Cutting Away. The Linocuts of Robert Gillmor.** 180 pages, many illustrations. Peterborough, UK: Langford Press, 2006. Hardback, £35.00, ISBN 1-904078-14-1 and 978-1-904078-14-2.

This beautiful book presents a striking series of linocuts, each accompanied by a page of text. That they should be

so engrossing, given the relative crudeness of the medium, reflects both the artist's skill and his love of his craft. He states frankly that he has been at his happiest when print-making rather than painting. Indeed, since giving up book illustrating, with all its 'fiddly details', in 1998, he has returned to it almost exclusively. Over two-thirds of the book comes from this recent period in Norfolk. The prints are arranged in broadly chronological order, while the text describes something of his professional life, and also painlessly imparts some technical information. In this way, the reader can appreciate how the Red-breasted Goose *Branta ruficollis* and the drake Eider *Somateria mollissima* are 'walking linocuts', while the Puffin *Fratercula arctica* taxes the technique to its limit.

The linocuts chosen include exhibition work, report covers, Christmas cards, book jackets ('New Naturalists' etc.), and bird fair posters. Many British birds are portrayed, with some of the author's favourites such as Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta* (five prints), Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*, Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* (four each) and Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna* (three). But there are also some animals, including no fewer than 11 of the Hare *Lepus europaeus*. I found the prints of Gannets *Morus bassanus* near Fastnet Rock, and The Cley Marsh Bull especially notable.

No one over the past 50 years has left a greater mark on the art associated with British ornithology than Robert Gillmor, often in books by others. This volume consists entirely of his own work and the bold, colourful prints selected are quite splendid.

Leo Kinlen

HILL, G.E. **Ivorybill Hunters. The Search for Proof in a Flooded Wilderness.** *xii + 260 pages, including numerous black-and-white photographs.* New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2007. Hardback, US \$24.95, ISBN 978-0-19-532346-7.

What a delight it was to read this book. In 14 chapters, followed by an epilogue, Geoffrey Hill, Professor of Biology at Auburn University, Alabama, takes his readers on a real adventure in search of Ivory-billed Woodpeckers *Campephilus principalis* in the southeastern United States.

The announcement, in 2005, that this species had been 'rediscovered' in Arkansas (see *Ibis* 149: 428–429) rekindled Hill's desire, first ignited 10 years earlier, to look for this magnificent species in southern Alabama, through diligent searching in the swamplands of the Pea River, a tributary of the Choctawhatchee River. The forests of the Pea, however, had now been made unsuitable through human interference, and so it was the swamp-forests of the Choctawhatchee itself, in northwest Florida, that became the scene for intensive fieldwork as committed enthusiasts, initially three individuals, commenced their searches for evidence that this woodpecker still survived there. The habitat contains many huge old-growth cypress trees *Taxodium* and

oaks and is flooded for much of the year, making it seemingly ideal for this species. Almost all of the searching was conducted by birdwatchers in one-person kayaks, the only practical means of moving about along the river and creeks and through the waterlogged channels. The author's text conveys in graphic detail the difficulties and the dangers of working in such inhospitable terrain: getting lost, almost drowning and being plagued by disease-carrying mosquitoes are just some of the hazards.

Hill writes in a very intimate style, engaging his readers as if they were personal acquaintances, and the result is a text that holds one's attention throughout. His story is essentially a tribute to the people who carried out this fieldwork and/or helped in the laboratory. It is full of eye-opening facts and amazing tales of great courage and bravery, and presents a wonderful insight into the motivation and determination of the dedicated birders searching for the 'Lord God Bird'. At times the suspense is almost tangible, and it is hard to put the book down.

The team recorded cavities in trees and apparent feeding signs left by woodpeckers, as well as sightings of the birds themselves. Yes, Hill and colleagues saw several Ivory-billed Woodpeckers! During May 2005 to May 2006, 14 such sightings were made, two of these involving two woodpeckers together, although all views were poor and very fleeting. (Bear in mind also that, as the available habitat is immense, only a very small proportion of the total was searched.) Whereas holes and bark-scaled tree trunks were photographed and their dimensions measured, no photographs or (convincing) video of the woodpeckers themselves were obtained. This failure is, perhaps, not surprising. This is, after all, an extremely wary woodpecker, adept at hiding away in the vast swampy wilderness of its habitat, and likely always to hear or see the human observer before the latter is at all close.

In addition to the huge number of large tree cavities and bark-scaled trees which were documented, the search team heard typical Ivorybill sounds – 'kent' calls and double knocks on trees – on 41 occasions, and the author is convinced that a population of Ivorybills survives in the swamp-forests of northwestern Florida. He states (on page 235): 'Not one bird. Not a single pair. At least a half dozen pairs and perhaps tens of pairs of Ivory-billed Woodpeckers in the extensive swamp forests along the Choctawhatchee River. The Ivory-billed Woodpecker is not extinct. It isn't even hanging by a thread. It has a solid toehold in the forests of the Florida Panhandle.'

One can only admire the tenacity and resilience of the search team, which ultimately involved a dozen or more people. If just one person manages to obtain film to justify Professor Hill's optimism, what a day that will be! In the meantime, I urge all birdwatchers to read this book, if only for the sheer pleasure of so doing. The fieldwork continues, and one can keep up to date via the Internet (several websites).

David A. Christie

LEONARD, P. **Important Bird Areas in Zambia**. 218 pages, many colour maps and photographs, drawings (most black and white), tables, 4 appendices. Lusaka: *Zambian Ornithological Society*, 2005. Paperback, £14.00, ISBN 9982-811-01-0. Email contact (*Zambian Ornithological Society*): zos@zamnet.zm

Until recently, the Zambian avifauna has been rather unfamiliar to many, given that it is only the latest field guides that have covered the country. Now Zambia has a first-class guide to key areas for birds, produced to a very high standard, as valuable for someone planning a trip as for conservationists seeking to protect the country's bird life.

This book represents a significant advance over the Zambia account in *Important Bird Areas in Africa* (Fishpool & Evans 2001), with 11 new sites considered (total 42). Happily, Zambia has rather few threatened bird species and none is classified as Critically Endangered or Endangered; 22 are considered Vulnerable, Near Threatened or Data Deficient. However, with some 750 species on the national list, Zambia does not lack diversity, despite being landlocked and dominated by the Zambebian biome. This is thanks to the large areas of unspoiled habitat that remain in the country. The protected-area network in the country is also substantial, over 80% of the Important Bird Areas (IBAs) falling within designated areas. Leonard nevertheless makes clear that some designations achieve little protection and the most pressing conservation issues identified by this book are highlighted at the outset.

The book follows a familiar format: introductory sections on the country, conservation infrastructure and issues, the IBA programme and what conservation work should come next; followed by individual site accounts; and rounded off with appendices of site and biome species lists, taxonomic notes and information for visitors. The introductory sections provide an extremely useful summary of the country and include excellent maps of elevation, rainfall, administration and the IBAs. Species of regional conservation concern are also discussed. This list is new and therefore somewhat tentative. Although it does not influence site selection the sites are quite successful in accounting for these species too.

The site accounts include a site description, discussion of the birds and other flora and fauna, conservation issues and information for visitors. Each is mapped, again at high quality, often together with nearby sites. A table summarizes the key birds, including species of regional conservation concern, and criteria for selection. Attractive line drawings by the author and colour photographs of key birds, other wildlife and habitats accompany each site. The bird sections are not confined to the threatened species, but deal with the wider community of more general interest to visitors. The accounts of other flora and fauna are necessarily brief, but list key herptiles and small mammals as well as the larger, more dramatic wildlife that Zambia is blessed with, and relevant references are given. Of special note is the information for visitors, including advice on

how to access each site as well as telephone numbers and websites of nearby lodges and campsites. These sections, along with the high-quality maps, ensure that IBAs in Zambia will be invaluable to someone planning a trip to the country. Indeed, I would consider it essential to consult this book if planning a visit and suspect it will draw in new visitors and prompt new fieldwork as well as achieve its primary aim of improving the conservation status of Zambia's wildlife.

Jeremy Lindsell

MASON, J.W., MCCHESENEY, G.J., MCIVER, W.R., CARTER, H.R., TAKEKAWA, J.T., GOLIGHTLY, R.T., ACKERMAN, J.T., ORTHMEYER, D.L., PERRY, W.M., YEE, J.L., PIERSON, M.O. & MCCRARY, M.D. **At-sea Distribution and Abundance of Seabirds off Southern California: a 20-year Comparison. (Studies in Avian Biology no. 33.)** 101 pages, 45 figures, 7 tables. Camarillo, CA: *Cooper Ornithological Society*, 2007. Paperback, \$15.00 from *Cooper Ornithological Society*, c/o *Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology*, 439 Calle San Pablo, Camarillo, CA 93010, USA, ISBN 9780943610726

In 1975–1978, the offshore waters of the Southern California Bight were subject to what were then the most intensive and detailed aerial surveys of marine birds ever carried out. During 1999–2002, surveys of the same area were conducted, not year-round, as in the original surveys, but at three seasons: winter (January), spring (May) and autumn (September). This publication summarizes the results from the most recent surveys and compares them with the earlier results to give an unusually detailed snapshot of what happened to marine bird communities off southern California during the last two decades of the 20th century.

This is not a book, but an extended scientific paper. Although it comprises 101 pages, only 21 of these are occupied by text. The rest is given over to very extensive tabulations and at-sea distribution maps for the majority of species recorded. The tables alone occupy a block of 31 densely printed pages.

Although the title emphasizes the 20-year comparison, this takes up relatively little of what text there is, the general discussion occupying only two pages. As expected, some species have decreased and some have increased. However, the decreasing species, particularly Sooty Shearwater *Puffinus griseus*, were more abundant originally than those that have increased, so that overall the combined density of all seabird species decreased between the two surveys. A reduction in the number of Sooty Shearwaters wintering in the California Current system was evident by the mid-1990s. The results reported here suggest that there has been little change since then.

The original 1970s surveys were groundbreaking at the time and the existence of such detailed baseline data gave a wonderful opportunity to examine changes over the intervening period. In the event, it appears that the study provided few surprises, but it nevertheless provides a rich

source of details on changes to the avifauna of the Southern California Bight.

Tony Gaston

MORRISON, M.L. (ed.). **The Northern Goshawk: a Technical Assessment of its Status, Ecology and Management.** (Studies in Avian Biology no. 31.) 369 pages, many black-and-white figures and tables. Camarillo, CA: Cooper Ornithological Society, 2006. Paperback, \$23.00 from Cooper Ornithological Society, c/o Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology, 439 Calle San Pablo, Camarillo, CA 93010, USA, ISBN 0-943610-68-0.

KENWARD, R. **The Goshawk.** 360 pages, 137 black-and-white figures and a few line drawings, 23 colour plates. London: T & A D Poyser, 2007. Hardback, £35.00, ISBN 978-0-7136-6565-9. Website: www.acblack.com

No Goshawk enthusiast or researcher can afford to ignore these two major reviews. As stated by Robert Kenward in the Foreword to the first, the Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis* is challenged only by the Bald Eagle *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*, the Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos* and the Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* in the number of scientific publications listed in the Raptor Information System. These two monographs bring together and make accessible all this huge amount of information, which will undoubtedly promote further research on this species and improve its management and conservation.

The Northern Goshawk is a compilation of 21 scientific and review papers of variable extent and depth, written by leading researchers on Goshawk biology and ecology. Most of the papers (12) present the results of several research programmes and studies on the status and ecology of Goshawks in different areas of North America, and range from population status, demography, and productivity to food habits, movements, habitat selection and management. Beyond the most traditional methods of studying Goshawk population biology and dynamics, several of these papers illustrate how the use of novel techniques such as satellite-tracking, remote sensing or video recording can be used to produce valuable information for the management and conservation of the species. They also show how some of these techniques can be combined with standard large-scale bird monitoring programmes to produce more reliable monitoring and information for habitat assessment. In spite of their regional scope, lessons from these studies can be applied to study, understand and manage Goshawk populations elsewhere. The book also includes five more general review papers, which summarize what is known about diet, ecology and population limitation in North America, Fennoscandia, and western, central and southern Europe. Altogether, these provide a very comprehensive account of what is known about Goshawk population regulation across its range, and are clearly essential reading for anyone interested in Goshawk ecology and management.

Four additional papers describe monitoring protocols and conservation schemes that have been developed in North America with the aim of assessing the real population status and trends of this raptor. They also illustrate what is being done to manage and preserve Goshawk populations in America, particularly in relation to forest management. A lot can be learned in Europe from the implementation of wide-scale, 'bioregional' monitoring projects undertaken by American researchers. In the last decades, the viability of Northern Goshawk populations in America has been in question and controversy surrounds the subject of listing the species as threatened or endangered. *The Northern Goshawk* does not aim to solve this debate, but to provide the sort of scientific information needed for the management and conservation of the species in the future.

Only someone with such a long, close and varied relationship with the Northern Goshawk as Robert Kenward could have produced the Poyser Goshawk monograph. The book is an extraordinary and impressively up-to-date account of what is known about the bird's biology, population ecology and conservation. It is based not only on more than 35 years' research by the author, but also reviews most of the Northern Goshawk scientific literature. Although the book mainly summarizes published scientific material, it also includes unpublished data from the author and from other researchers. It thus makes available in English a lot of information about the species, which is either unpublished or difficult of access, or only available in languages not familiar to most ornithologists and Goshawk enthusiasts.

The book's ten chapters review races and relatives, biometrics, nesting and laying, incubation and chick-rearing, movements, diet and foraging, prey selection and predation pressure, demography and population regulation, falconry, domestic breeding and predation management, and conservation. Each chapter, like the book itself, begins with a tale from the author's research experience, which helps to introduce the subject and the objectives of the chapter and, more interestingly, the author's motivations and point of view. Each chapter but the last also concludes with 'Implications for conservation and management', which fills the gap between academic research, conservation and the needs of society, an issue of particular interest to Robert Kenward. The 'Conclusions' at the end of each chapter most usefully give the reader the gist of its contents. The book is written in a readable style, but in some instances it presumes some familiarity with Goshawk biology and literature, as when races, evolutionary relationships and origins are described. Also, the book contains no tables, which will be a little disappointing to those wanting a closer view of the original information or to compare data across studies or areas. I missed them particularly in the diet chapter. However, there are plenty of graphs that summarize the main results of the reviewed material and help to clarify the text. The book contains a set of only 23 plates, which is clearly not enough to

illustrate some aspects of Goshawk biology described in the text, such as plumage variation. Inevitably, the selection of topics covered reflects the author's personal taste and, in some instances, the book leaves the reader wanting more. The bibliography is very up to date and will undoubtedly be very useful to anyone interested in exploring beyond the details given in the text. The book is not only a natural history of the Northern Goshawk, but also illustrates the personal views of the author about the role of scientific research and conservation in our society. It will become an essential reference and source of inspiration for anyone interested in the Goshawk in the coming years.

Santi Mañosa

ONLEY, D. & SCOFIELD, P. **Albatrosses, Petrels and Shearwaters of the World.** 240 pages, 45 colour plates and 137 colour maps, other figures and tables. London: Christopher Helm, 2007. Paperback, £19.99, ISBN 978-0-7136-4332-9. Website: www.acblack.com

This guide is the more taxonomically restricted successor to Peter Harrison's hugely successful *Seabirds: an identification guide* published originally in 1983 (see *Ibis* 126: 429–430 and 129: 596). The print runs of that book must total tens of thousands as it is a mainstay of marine ornithologists, and graces ships' libraries worldwide. At 448 pages, Harrison was far from pocket-sized, and Christopher Helm have made the clearly sensible decision that their new Field Guide would have a narrower remit, covering only the 137 species (according to the cover) of albatrosses and petrels (i.e. the four families of tubenoses in the order Procellariiformes). The book contains an initial species list with a brief indication of distribution, a preface and acknowledgements, short sections on procellariiform taxonomy and family characteristics, identification (what makes it difficult), and conservation, followed by the colour plates and 155 pages of species accounts providing a wealth of useful information on taxonomy, distribution, behaviour, jizz, size, plumage, moult and feather wear, and key points of identification. Additional background material on taxonomy, morphology and range precede the accounts for related species. The authors have kept to the format of plates followed by accounts. My personal preference is for the inclusion of illustrations within the accounts, thus obviating the need for continual jumping many pages back and forth, and enabling more rapid checking of speculative identifications in the field against distribution maps. However, others will doubtless prefer the traditional approach.

The taxonomy generally follows Michael Brooke's *Albatrosses and petrels across the world* (2004), or Austin *et al.* (*Auk* 121 [2004]: 847–864) for the shearwaters, but departs from both in elevating Grey-faced Petrel *Pterodroma [macroptera] gouldi* to full species status, and includes further changes, presumably on the authors' own authority, within

the shearwaters. Justification for these is perhaps not entirely clear, at least based on peer-reviewed literature, and is sure to generate lively debate. I also find it peculiar that the authors prefer a minority name, or their own common name, respectively, for 'Snowy' over 'Wandering' Albatross for nominate *Diomedea exulans* (when, according to ISI Web of Knowledge, not one of 172 peer-reviewed papers referring to *D. exulans* published since 1977 has done so), and 'New Zealand' over the now well-accepted 'Antipodean' Albatross for *D. antipodensis*.

The plates are by Derek Onley, who also illustrated Heather and Robertson's excellent *Field guide to the birds of New Zealand* (1997). These typically show 3–4 species per plate, including, as appropriate, different ages and plumage phases, views from above and below, and details of heads and tails. They are a big improvement on Harrison, in a style that is somewhat 'sketchier' and with more subdued coloration compared with the sharper lines and generally bolder colours in, for example, Brooke (2004) and H. Shirihai's *Complete guide to Antarctic wildlife* (2002), so will appeal to a different taste. The plates would have benefited from a coloured rather than their preferred white background, which currently imbues the heads of the albatrosses with a ghostly aura. The text sometimes has a personal, accessible style, occasionally providing an impression of humility, and elsewhere rather the opposite. The former includes the excellent suggestion that readers 'take this book into the field, write all over it ... stick in better sketches and contribute to a better edition in ten years time', and the latter, a statement suggesting that local rarities committees accept records without sufficient information to make an 'informed' opinion, which is unlikely to go down well in such circles that tend to pride themselves on rigorous peer review. The distribution maps are adequate, although somewhat speculative for a few species, but would have benefited from a numbering system highlighting each breeding island group (used to good effect in Shirihai 2002), which would have allowed much of the detailed text on distribution to be dispensed with. In any event, these are all minor criticisms; this is a well-produced, comprehensive guide and, at under £20, is recommended to all those with an interest in at-sea identification of a fascinating group of birds.

Richard A. Phillips

PEACOCK, F. **Pipits of Southern Africa. The Complete Guide to Africa's Ultimate LBJ's.** 296 pages, 7 colour plates, 42 black-and-white figures, line drawings, tables, many maps (some in colour), 3 appendices. Pretoria, South Africa: Faansie Peacock, 2006. Paperback, R187.50 (including p.&p.), ISBN 0-620-35967-6. For information, contact the author: faansiep@telkomsa.net or www.pipits.co.za

Among African birds, pipits of the family Motacillidae present a considerable identification challenge. They

not only differ very subtly, but are also poorly studied. This book aims to be a current identification manual for the pipits of southern Africa (14 *Anthus* species, and the yellow pipits *Hemimacronyx* and *Tmetothylacus*), but dabbles in a wide array of related topics. The author draws on personal field observations, comments from other observers and published information. The book is divided into six sections: how to use the book, introduction to pipits, pipit identification, field guide, species accounts, and appendices, which include biometric data. It contains many drawings and text boxes with interesting tidbits, the identification section is informative with a handy key, and the general layout is clear. Faansie Peacock is clearly passionate about these birds, and has tackled the entire task of writing the text, illustrating the guide, publishing and distributing it, and finally producing a handsome, unique and very affordable book. Since the book only opens with difficulty, I am concerned the binding won't hold up to rigorous field use.

Perhaps the greatest disappointment is that, by not referencing most of the contents to clarify what is unpublished personal observation and opinion, and what not, an opportunity has been missed to produce a standard reference work. The author identifies lack of study as a problem, but makes no attempt to remedy this. Despite all the time spent in the field, there is a disappointing lack of data, especially about pipit behaviour and vocalizations. In a short skim, I also found several incorrect statements: for example, Cameroon Pipit *Anthus cameroonensis* and Bannerman's Pipit *A. bannermani* both have their main range within the Bamenda Highlands in Cameroon, but these mountains do not fall within the range of either species according to Peacock, who also fails to mention that the Cameroon Pipit occurs in Nigeria as well as Cameroon.

Perhaps the most useful section is the 'field guide'. A good field guide should be generously and accurately illustrated, and information should be both rapidly accessible, and comprehensive yet succinct. It fares poorly on these criteria, although it is more useful than any other field guide available at present. Despite the small number of species, many subspecies are not depicted and I could find only one illustration of a juvenile pipit. The quality of the illustrations is not of the highest professional standard, colour reproduction is poor, and the birds' sizes are not indicated. This section is located towards the middle of the book and can be difficult to find. The text facing the plates is in rather small print and includes information not needed for identification.

Comprehensive species accounts make up the bulk of the book. The author has an easy writing style, though not always so concise or lucid as one might wish. The text would have benefited greatly from professional editing; to state that the Bushveld Pipit *A. caffer* has a 'surprisingly large' display area and that it is a 'spirited pipit' is simply not useful. Also, while repetition of information is good, it

has been overdone, which is a pity as it makes a difficult group even harder to enjoy. Overall, the book sparkles with many interesting ideas, although their execution could be much improved. It is modestly priced and there is little reason not to go out and buy your copy. I look forward to seeing a revised edition, fully referenced, with some convincing quantification of pipit behaviour, and perhaps an accompanying sound guide.

Michael S.L. Mills

RESTALL, R., RODNER, C. & LENTINO, M. **Birds of Northern South America – an Identification Guide. Volume 1: 880 pages, some line drawings; Volume 2: 656 pages, 306 colour plates, 6388 images of 2308 species, all mapped.** London: Christopher Helm, 2006. Paperback, £60.00 (volume 1), ISBN 978-0-7136-7242-8; £40.00 (volume 2), ISBN 978-0-7136-7243-5; £85.00 (2-volume set), ISBN 978-7136-6026-5. Website: www.acblack.com

In terms of species richness and geographical scope, *Birds of Northern South America* is one of the most ambitious identification guides ever compiled. Produced by a team based in Venezuela, it covers 2308 species recorded in (or near) seven Neotropical countries: Ecuador (without the Galapagos Islands), Colombia, Venezuela, Guyana, Suriname, French Guiana, and Trinidad and Tobago. The first of its two volumes contains species accounts, the second colour plates and maps.

Following brief introductory sections in Volume 1 come 750 pages of textual accounts, each containing information about diagnostic features, subspecific variation, behaviour, status, habitat and voice. Also included is a 32-page discography for most species, a helpful resource in a region where so many identifications are based on vocalizations. Robin Restall painted all the c. 6400 illustrations on 306 plates in Volume 2, a staggering achievement that took over a decade. The last page has a quick index to all the main groups of birds, which aids reference in the field.

Publication in two volumes makes sense for an avifauna so speciose, because Volume 2 makes a portable and affordable field guide in its own right. One cost of this approach is that most information about voice is published in the reference volume, whereas it could have been more useful in the field volume. Another is that maps and distributional information appear in separate volumes, making it necessary to flip from one book to the other when researching ranges. Nomenclature and systematics are commendably conservative, following current South American Checklist Committee guidelines (<http://www.museum.lsu.edu/~Remsen/SACCBaseline.html>).

I have field-tested both volumes in northern Colombia and eastern Venezuela, finding them to be very useful field-identification tools. The illustration of many subspecies is perhaps the most original contribution, as the overwhelming diversity of the Neotropical avifauna has

precluded this type of detail in previous publications. It is a joy to see subspecific variation depicted for widespread polytypic species such as Scaled Antpitta *Grallaria guatemalensis* and Three-striped Warbler *Basileuterus tristriatus*. The detail is not limited to subspecies: age-related variation is illustrated for many taxa, including Ruby Topaz *Chrysolampis mosquitus*, which previously were challenging to identify in subadult plumage.

On the downside, the illustrations sometimes give a skewed impression of geographical variation, perhaps according to the availability of specimens in the Phelps Collection, Caracas. For example, we are presented with a range of images for two Venezuelan races of Páramo Seedeater *Catamenia homochroa*, but no illustration of the Santa Marta race *oreophila*, often considered a separate species. More importantly, the quality and accuracy of Restall's illustrations is disappointing. They are attractive, well organized and useful, but they fail to capture the essence and character of many species, giving the unwelcome impression that they are more often based on museum specimens than field experience or photographs. Sometimes, there are regular errors of scale: the perched Cooper's Hawk *Accipiter cooperii* is hardly larger than the Tiny Hawk *A. superciliosus*, for example. In many cases, postures and plumage details are odd or incorrect. These problems are less important in distinctive taxa, but compounded in species with subtle plumage, rendering some of them unrecognizable. Thus, a newcomer to the region wishing to learn and identify difficult groups of Neotropical birds, especially tyrant-flycatchers (Tyrannidae), ovenbirds (Furnariidae), female manakins (Pipridae) and female hummingbirds (Trochilidae), is best advised to start elsewhere.

The maps are clear, detailed and generally well researched. Major rivers are shown, as are national boundaries. Ranges are labelled for most subspecies, an original feature that links up neatly with subspecies annotations on adjacent plates. As might be expected, the accuracy is best in Venezuela, and it seems that Ecuador has been included almost as an afterthought, despite the availability of recently published maps for Ecuadorian birds. Omitted, for example, are Ecuadorian ranges for Sooty-headed Tyrannulet *Phyllosmyias griseiceps* and Rufous-naped Greenlet *Hylophilus semibrunneus*.

Turning to Volume 2, it is clear that much diligent scholarship has gone into gathering published information into a concise and timely summary. Again, the section on subspecific range and identification stands out as an excellent resource. One drawback of relying on published information is that voice descriptions from several works are often included, even though they are repetitions of the same vocalization, described in different styles. Overall, a disappointing number of errors have crept into the maps, plates and text, but the authors are to be applauded for producing and updating a web page of corrections (not yet online).

Despite these quibbles, *Birds of Northern South America* is an extremely valuable contribution. It will appeal to anyone travelling more broadly in the region, and it is worth every penny for the improved treatment of immature plumages and subspecies. Given how little we know about the distribution and taxonomic status of the majority of these subspecies, it represents a vital tool for field studies and an important step towards a deeper understanding of the Neotropical avifauna.

Joseph A. Tobias

ROTHENBERG, D. *Why Birds Sing*. xiii + 258 pages, 53 figures. London: Allen Lane (Penguin Books), 2005. Hardback, £17.99, ISBN 978-0-713-99829-0 and 0-713-99829-6.

Undoubtedly a labour of love (to coin a cliché), and well written by an enthusiastic aesthete, it has to be said at once that this volume is not a work of science. Its ten chapters are well supported by sonagrams and the like and by reproductions of some pleasing early engravings. Chapter headings include 'Your tune or mine' and 'Listen with the mockingbird'. There are four pages of further reading (very useful), 12 of notes, which include some citations, and eight of detailed index. Rothenberg has clearly read much about avian and other acoustics and synthesizes some of it. He says, 'We should not dismiss the possibility that pleasure in song may be something humans and birds can share'; but 'I do not look for proof but only possibility ...'. If it has a central theme at all, the core question of this work is: *do birds have a (limited) aesthetic sense, evolutionarily anticipating that of humans?*

To answer this question scientifically is not easy, and certainly not as simple as the author of this book believes. It appears he so badly wants to believe that birds sing as an expression of individual joy that his thinking becomes a little capricious. Investigating a parallel notion, admittedly of pictorial art among primates, Desmond Morris (*The Biology of Art*, 1962, p. 144) uses the more cautious term 'self-rewarding' activity. In a BBC radio programme, *The Naturalist: Animals as Artists* (10 March 1963), which I produced, Morris and Joan Hall-Craggs discussed the surprisingly close parallels between his chimps' paintings and her Blackbirds' songs, using Morris's six biological principles of art (pages 158–168).

In another BBC radio programme, produced by Dilys Breese, Joan Hall-Craggs discusses the inventiveness of one individual Blackbird's song output, comparing his 'music' with others (*Living World: Pook the Blackbird*, 20 May 1973). Copies are held in the BBC Archive, British Library Sound Archive, and Edward Grey Institute, Oxford.

David Rothenberg is an American professor of philosophy and music and an active clarinettist. He plays his instrument 'to' birds in the wild and in zoos, and can be heard on recordings at www.whybirdssing.com, and on the CD that parallels this book (see this issue of *Ibis*). These

'jam sessions' also appear in a remarkable television documentary (produced by Iain Dodgeon of Cheetah Television for BBC4, 80 [sic] minutes, 20 June 2006). Anyone at all interested in this field must strive to view this. In the programme, devoted to Rothenberg's work and views, Peter Slater (author, with Clive Catchpole, of *Bird Song: Biological themes and variations*, 1995) comments at intervals and, in an iconic exchange at one point, in which Rothenberg, almost in desperation, asks 'What would it take for me to become a scientist?' Slater, with academic directness but consummate English politeness, responds 'Complete retraining!' A DVD of the programme is deposited in the Alexander Library, EGI, Oxford. Supplementary 'music' is available at: www.bbc.co.uk/bbcfour/documentaries/features/birds-sing.shtml

The question 'Do birds have an aesthetic sense?' is perfectly valid scientifically, and has long been addressed by scientists. Rothenberg does recognize this, but not as fully as he might have. He deals with Hall-Craggs's work but not her important paper 'The aesthetic content of bird song' (in *Bird Vocalizations*, ed. R.A. Hinde, 1969). He devotes three pages to Charles Hartshorne's answers to Hartshorne's question (in *Born to Sing*, 1973), 'Must not singing be enjoyable in itself?', but claims that 'most bird scientists ... shy away from even asking the kind of questions that intrigued Hartshorne'. Most scientists may, though I doubt it, and one serious one, W.H. Thorpe, as long ago as 1958 (*Ibis* 100: 535–570) wrote 'The idea that bird song is often an expression of irrepressible joy can be supported with some plausible arguments, and is certainly not without scientific justification. In so far as this may be true, the songs of birds can be regarded as a first step towards true artistic creation and expression'. Also in 1958 (*Ibis* 100: 421–445), R.E. Moreau chose to publish Hartshorne's scientifically cheeky (for the time) paper 'The relation of bird song to music', which caused some raised eyebrows.

Rothenberg has read much bioacoustic literature and does not deny the basic biological understanding of sound production by birds and other animals, but could be argued to have picked examples of scientific work that fit in with what he wants to show, often ignoring much better ones that do not.

Because many people believe or want to believe that birds sing because they are happy, the volume could prove popular, as book reviewers in *The Daily Telegraph* (January 2006, Lawrence Norfolk) and in *The Weekend Telegraph* (29 April 2006, Peter Marren) clearly think. And as the television reviewer, Nancy Banks-Smith (*The Guardian*, 21 June 2006), by implication, concurs. However, it is difficult to disagree with the UK's Poet Laureate, Andrew Motion, who says (*The Guardian*, 10 December 2005) that the book founders under 'welters of facts' and 'lacks a clear trajectory'.

The combinations of avian and human sound production, the 'jam sessions' so important to the volume's thesis,

are referred to, by one book reviewer (Andrew G. Horn, *Bioacoustics* 16 [2006]: 87–90) as 'the acoustic equivalent of photographing infants in bumblebee suits'!

Jeffery Boswall

RUGGIERI, L. & FESTARI, I. **A Birdwatcher's Guide to Italy.** 303 pages, 64 black-and-white maps. Barcelona: Lynx Edicions, 2005. Paperback, £16.95, ISBN 978-84-87334-86-3.

There are many reasons for making a visit to Italy, but traditionally, birdwatching has not featured very high on the list. Few bird-tour companies include it among their itineraries, and its reputation as a bird-free zone is hard to shake off. And yet, and I can vouch for it personally, there are plenty of interesting birds to be seen, and this book will show you what and where they are. As in most such guides, the core is a site listing, 100 in all, numbered consecutively from the northwest, running down the peninsula, and ending up in Sicily and Sardinia, about a quarter of the total being on these two islands. A map shows you where they all are, a table gives you the administrative region within which each is found, and the accounts for each one have full details of how to get there and the best spots to concentrate on when you do, with extremely clear maps where appropriate. There is absolutely no excuse for getting lost!

What makes this book rather different is that, in a separate section, the authors have selected 119 (give or take a few) 'important species', which they feel are of particular interest to the visiting birder. For each one, details of the bird's status, distribution and population both in Europe and in Italy are given, plus a note of the habitat favoured, and a reference to the sites in Italy where it might be found. Other guides sometimes attempt to provide similar species lists, but none does so as well as here – not only is it easy to target certain key species, but their occurrence is neatly placed in context. Within each site account these species are listed separately from the commoner ones to be expected, with abbreviations giving their status at the site concerned. A great deal of information is packed into a small space, and it is worth reading the 'How to Use this Guide' section carefully to comprehend it fully. Another approach that distinguishes this guide is that it spells out all the subspecies found in the region, giving an optimistic take (from a lister's point of view) on those that might make it to species level. So if you want to see a Tyrrhenian Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis tchusii* or Lilford's Woodpecker *Dendrocopos (leucotos) lilfordi*, this book will point you in the right direction.

As we have come to expect from Lynx Edicions, production standards are high and the layout very clear, although the nomenclature is a bit erratic at times. Both 'traditional' and 'revised' English names are used in different places, so that one has to be aware, for instance, that Zitting Cisticola and Fan-tailed Warbler, indexed separately but with no overlap, are the same species, *Cisticola juncidis*. Overall,

this is a worthy successor to LIPU's *Where to Watch Birds in Italy* (Helm, 1994), which covered similar ground but is now out of print.

Ken Hall

SPEAR, L.B. & AINLEY, D.G. **Storm-Petrels of the Eastern Pacific Ocean: Species Assembly and Diversity along Marine Habitat Gradients. (Ornithological Monographs no. 62.)** xii + 77 pages, 37 figures, 10 tables, 2 appendices. Washington, DC: American Ornithologists' Union, 2007. Paperback, \$10.00, ISBN 0-943610-71-0.

Much of what is known about seabirds comes from studies on breeding colonies, yet many species spend the vast majority of their lives at sea, some in truly oceanic waters far from any continental-anchored land. This is the case for the storm-petrels (Hydrobatidae), the smallest of the seabirds. This monograph offers rare insights into the main life of a storm-petrel – its time at sea, and it is classic Spear and Ainley: all-encompassing, the result of data collected over a 16-year period during all seasons in an area of ocean whose size dwarfs the continent of Africa. Fourteen species of five genera are represented, six further treated in subspecies categories. Of the 14 species, Spear and Ainley's surveys achieved complete coverage of the at-sea ranges of eight, almost complete coverage of a further three. Results are presented in individual species accounts that detail at-sea range, habitat use, behaviour, population estimates, a synthesis section that compares patterns across species, and a wealth of figures, tables and appendices.

Among the many major contributions to seabird science from this pair is a dogged insistence that at-sea density must be calculated by taking into account corrections for 'flux' (flight direction and speed; Spear *et al.* [1992] *Auk* 109: 385–389) and the introduction of Generalized Additive Models as an analytical tool to predict seabird density in unsampled areas (Clarke *et al.* [2003] *J. Appl. Ecol.* 40: 278–292). Spear and Ainley use these tools in the present monograph to produce global population estimates and distribution maps for 11 taxa. These estimates support the surprising idea that storm-petrel populations of the eastern Pacific contain a significant number of adult birds that are capable of breeding but do not, the authors speculate, because of a limitation in nesting habitat. These population estimates are perhaps the most significant contribution of this important monograph. As a group, storm-petrels are poorly known on their breeding colonies because most arrive and depart only at night, and nest in rocky crevices or burrows that are difficult, if not impossible, to access. Population estimates based on breeding colony censuses are, therefore, largely unavailable for this group.

Another significant contribution, and a hallmark of Larry Spear, is the exhaustive statistical treatment of the relationships between species density and environmental gra-

dients in physical properties of the ocean and atmosphere. These analyses explain from zero to 57% of the variation in density for any given species, and 60% for the group as a whole. The myriad of complex patterns that result are well documented, but difficult to interpret. More discussion of the ecological significance of such habitat relationships to the bird would have been welcome.

The discussion of the significance of storm-petrel species diversity patterns in the eastern Pacific offers some intriguing speculation that could only be justified by the vast amount of data presented here. Two examples: (1) storm-petrel diversity in the eastern Pacific is significantly higher than in any other ocean, perhaps because of the age, stability and diversity of the habitat, and the relatively few and spatially isolated islands available for breeding; (2) the overlap in ecological niche between coexisting storm-petrel species may be larger than for most terrestrial bird species because storm-petrels wander across large stretches of ocean between sometimes disconnected breeding and foraging habitat.

This was the first of two monumental monographs published by the Spear and Ainley team in 2007 (the second, on diet and foraging dynamics, being Spear *et al.* [2007] *Studies in Avian Biology* no. 35). A colleague of mine once remarked on the utility of such monographs: 'today's rapidly changing environment makes the documented patterns outdated before they are even published'. I would argue differently. It is precisely because the world is changing so rapidly that these kinds of monographs are so valuable. They provide a permanent record, perhaps not of what is, but of what was, and with that, an opportunity to understand how current patterns relate to the past, to better predict what the future will bring, and perhaps even to offer scientific advice as to how to mitigate or reverse such effects.

I was fortunate to have known Larry Spear professionally and personally, during the last 20 years of his life. Larry never did anything with less than complete and total dedication. To those of us who knew him, it is no surprise that this monograph is an unparalleled contribution to our understanding of the biology of a mysterious group of seabirds in a mysterious habitat in the largest ocean on the planet. It is a cornerstone of our knowledge of storm-petrels and will be a key reference for decades to come. And for Larry, it was just another in a long series of such contributions that he pursued with his typical intensely focused and single-minded passion.

Lisa T. Ballance

STAP, D. **Birdsong: a Natural History.** 261 pages. New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2006 (first published in 2005 by Scribner [Simon & Schuster, Inc.]). Paperback, \$15.95, £9.99, ISBN 978-0-19-530901-0 and 0-19-530901-4.

The book's subtitle is, at first sight, a little 'grand' for this volume, which is more than adequately dubbed on the

cover as a 'creative mixture of reportage, storytelling and research'. Stap is a professor of English and nature writer who for a decade or more came under the influence of the (Macaulay) Library of Natural Sounds at Cornell in upstate New York and, in particular, of Donald Kroodsma whose more major work, *The Singing Life of Birds*, also appeared in 2005.

I have not (forgive me) read the entire work, but it is clear from selected sections and from the detailed 13-page index that a wide range of topics is dealt with. There are no references, however. It is certainly more 'accessible' than the weightier volumes recently published, superb though they may be, for example the monumental *Nature's Music: The Science of Birdsong* edited by Peter Marler and Hans Slabbekoorn (2004) and reviewed in *Ibis* 147: 855–856.

This is a good, personal, up-to-date, readable account of sound production by birds.

Jeffery Boswall

TENNYSON, A. & MARTINSON, P. **Extinct Birds of New Zealand.** v + 180 pages, 2 maps, 3 tables, 58 full-page colour paintings. Wellington, NZ: Te Papa Press, 2006. Hardback, NZ\$65.00, ISBN 978-0-909010-21-8 and 0-909010-21-8.

If you ever wondered what the New Zealand region's 58 extinct birds 'looked like' – for example, the giant moa *Dinornis* (world's tallest bird) and Haast's Eagle *Harpagornis moorei* (world's largest eagle) – then go and check this book out. It is well organized, easily read, with heaps of excellent references and background notes on all extinct species, including summaries of their first discovery, distribution, cause(s) of extinction and a number of known specimens.

New Zealand's long isolation (80 million years) has generated a plethora of unique bird species, and with no competing land mammals; some grew very big (the nine species of moa – all extinct) and some very small (six species of wren – four extinct, including Lyall's Wren *Traversia lyalli*, the world's smallest flightless bird). The other endemics include about a dozen waterbirds (a bittern *Ixobrychus*, several Anseriformes and three snipes *Coenocorypha*) and another dozen Gruiformes (rails, waterhen, coots, etc.), plus some real oddballs like the Kōkako *Callaeas cinereus* and Piopio *Turnagra capensis* and *T. tanagra*. In summary, 41% of New Zealand's endemic avifauna has become extinct in the last 800 years – unfortunately, all as a direct result of the arrival of humans in the region 800 years ago.

To give some balance, the book is not only about the catastrophic impact of human hunting and invasive species on island biota, but also promotes the exciting new science of island restoration. New Zealand is a world leader in cat, goat, pig and rat eradications on islands, plus predator control in mainland reserves. In the last 20 years, the results have been a spectacular success and dozens of critically endangered bird species have been brought back from the brink of extinction. Not to mention the often-overlooked benefits for indigenous insects, lizards and plants. One

visit to a predator-free island will make you a believer for life.

This volume does an excellent job of selling conservation science. As a finalist in the 'Montana NZ Book Awards – 2007', it has reached new heights for a book on fossil birds. In many ways, Martinson's fine illustrations and Tennyson's one-page species summaries complement the comprehensive scientific detail found in Trevor Worthy and Richard Holdaway's *The Lost World of the Moa* (2002; reviewed in *Ibis* 145: 523–524). It will be quite a challenge to better these two volumes.

Graham Wragg

WASSINK, A. & OREEL, G.J. **The Birds of Kazakhstan.** 288 pages, 66 colour photographs and a few paintings, 5 figures (maps) and many distribution maps. De Cocksdorp, Texel, The Netherlands: Arend Wassink, 2007. Hardback, €49.50 including p.&p. (The Netherlands) or €55.00 (rest of the world), ISBN 978-90-811462-1-0. Contact: www.birdsofkazakhstan.com

Since Kazakhstan gained independence from the former USSR in 1991, birdwatchers have been increasingly visiting the country's vast steppes and snow-capped 'Celestial Mountains' of the Tien Shan. Unfortunately, the extensive regional ornithological literature is largely in Russian, so this avifaunal guide in English is timely.

The perfunctory introductory chapters cover geography, habitats, climate, migration, etc., whilst the appendices feature rejected records, Red List species, plants mentioned in the text, and a gazetteer, though no site guide. The systematic list, with two to three species per page and supplemented by maps and bar-diagrams, occupies 224 pages of text. Only breeding distribution is mapped, but on a huge regional scale without defining altitude or habitat, many regions being larger than some European countries. A similar effect would be achieved if Eurasian Dotterel *Charadrius morinellus* were plotted breeding for the whole of the Netherlands.

There are quite a few surprises taxonomically, and a couple may be mentioned here. *Contra* most recent literature (notably, *Pipits and Wagtails* by P. Alström & K. Mild, 2003), every race of White Wagtail *Motacilla alba* and Yellow Wagtail *M. flava* has been split, creating seven additional species; some *Hippolais* have also been unilaterally named as *Acrocephalus* warblers, which would seem a little premature without wider international acceptance.

The distributional information presented for each species and race, and on hybridization, is excellent and reasonably comprehensive. It should be, as probably more than 90% appears to have been paraphrased from the abridged English version (reviewed in *Ibis* 148: 577) of *The Birds of Kazakhstan* by E. & A. Gavrilov (2005). For waterbirds, there are new data from surveys in northern Kazakhstan and additional information has been gleaned from trip reports by visiting Westerners that was not available to the

Gavrilovs, though some of this seems inaccurate. Oriental Skylark *Alauda gulgula*, for example, reported as the commonest lark around Lake Zaysan in June 2001, was not present on a visit in June 2006, and the map for this species in volume 3 of *The Birds of Kazakhstan* (Dolgushin & Korelov 1970) showed Zaysan to be far from its regular breeding range, though N.N. Berezovikov and A.S. Levin (in Gavrilov & Gavrilov 2005) did find it there more recently.

Many of the contradictions to Gavrilov and Gavrilov (2005) seem unwarranted, particularly regarding missing specimens, which the Gavrilovs assessed using original references. Western birdwatchers, who are infrequent visitors, should not reject the work of eminent ornithologists such as Dolgushin and Zarudny without going to the original references. See-see Partridge *Ammoperdix griseogularis* has been recorded in Kazakhstan, on the Ustyurt Plateau, south of the Sam sands, at approximately 45°N, 56°E in Mangystau region (see Kuz'mina [1962] *The Birds of Kazakhstan*, vol. 2); this is indeed close to the border with Uzbekistan, but evidence in support of Wassink and Oreel's claim that the record was in that country rather than in Kazakhstan should surely have been given. There is no reason to doubt the identification of the Oriental Plover *Charadrius veredus* by N.A. Zarudny, who described obtaining it in 1910 in his field diaries (see Dolgushin [1962] *The Birds of Kazakhstan*, vol. 2). The extensive museum collections in Almaty, Moscow, St Petersburg, etc., do not seem to have been utilized; otherwise, the authors would have been more aware of the status of Asian Short-toed Lark *Calandrella cheleensis* and recent specimens from near the Aral Sea. The main text is not referenced to their bibliography, so there is no reference for the Red Knot *Calidris canutus*, a new species for the country. Fortunately, many references are copied from the Gavrilovs' bibliography, whose text is fully linked. It is nevertheless surprising that information from papers in the *Kazakhstan Ornithological Bulletin 2002–2004*, which are listed and consistently marked 'In Russian' by the Gavrilovs, has simply been taken over by Wassink and Oreel. Had they checked and translated the original Russian sources, they would (should) surely have used far more distributional information from the papers in their own book.

This is a fine production with high-quality photographs of habitats and birds and, as the Gavrilovs' book is difficult to obtain, Wassink and Oreel is sure to fill an information gap in the West.

Andrew Grieve

WEICK, F. Owls (Strigiformes): Annotated and Illustrated Checklist. 384 pages, including 15 pages of colour drawings and 86 figures. Heidelberg: Springer-Verlag, 2006. Hardback, £92.50, ISBN 978-3-540-35234-1.

The cryptic coloration and secretive lifestyle of owls (Strigiformes) have made their taxonomy problematic for many years. New discoveries and new evidence from the

study of vocalizations and phylogenetic relationships have greatly expanded our understanding of owl diversity. Weick recognizes 220 species, but acknowledges that his list is far from final. The species and subspecies accounts make up the bulk of the book. For each taxon, a list of synonyms is given, including many older names that were not included in the 'Peters Check-List' (1940). Two unique features of this book are the lists of museums holding specimens and the lists of references to illustrations and photographs. These lists, albeit incomplete, will be a useful starting-point for taxonomic and identification purposes. In addition, each species and subspecies account includes a citation of the type description, a brief statement on distribution, a table with standard measurements (without information on sample size and standard deviations) and selected references. The remainder of the book consists of illustrated sections on owls in flight, newly described and recently rediscovered species, parallel geographical variation of Great Horned Owl *Bubo virginianus*, wing formulae and references.

For such a scholarly work, I found a surprising number of errors, including in the spelling of scientific names, and in the names of authors and illustrators. The convention to place the author's name in parentheses if the taxon was originally described in another genus is applied inconsistently throughout this work. Koepcke's Screech Owl was originally described as *Otus koepckeii* (not '*Otus koepckeae*') – the specific epithet was only later amended to *koepckeae*. The type locality of the recently described *Glaucidium sicki* is in E Brazil (not 'E Peru'). The caption to figure 1 contains errors in the names of two authors whose works are not included in the References. Although most of these problems are relatively minor, the great number of them indicates a general sloppiness.

The taxonomy is based on *Owls: a guide to the owls of the world* (König *et al.*, 1999), but has been updated by the author. Weick recognizes several additional island species of barn owl (*Tyto thomensis*, *T. insularis*, *T. punctatissima*, *T. crassirostris*), but does not cite convincing evidence or previous studies in support. The treatment of genera is much less progressive. Snowy Owl *Bubo scandiacus* and the fish owls are retained in *Nyctea* and *Ketupa*, respectively, although these genera are now known to be part of the eagle owl *Bubo* clade. The New World screech owls and Old World scops owls are retained in *Otus*, although recent studies indicate that this genus is polyphyletic.

I was surprised to find an account of an entirely new species of owl in this book. In a practice reminiscent of a bygone era, Weick proposes a new species (*Ninox dubiosa*) on the basis of a single specimen in the Forschungsinstitut und Naturkundemuseum Senckenberg in Frankfurt am Main, which lacks information on the collecting date and locality, or the name of the collector. The book includes a colour painting and a few measurements of the new species, but lacks a description of its morphological characters. Moreover, it provides no indication of the taxa with which

the specimen has been compared and which alternative identities have been considered and rejected. As a result, there is no way to judge whether *N. dubiosa* represents a valid taxon. In addition, without a description that states the characters that are purported to differentiate *N. dubiosa*, Weick's book lacks an essential requirement for the proper naming of a new species taxon under the rules of the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature (1999, Article 13.1). These problems could have been avoided with proper peer review.

In short, Weick's *Checklist* has many features of a scholarly work and will be useful to specialists and bird illustrators, but the sloppy editing and the lack of adequate peer review have detracted from its scientific value.

George Sangster

Also received

BALLANCE, D.K. **The Untrodden Combes: Being an Exploration of the Birds of Weir Water and Chalk Water in the Parishes of Porlock and Oare in the County of Somerset at the Start of the Twenty-first Century.** 71 pages, 1 map, 1 black-and-white and 28 colour photographs, tables. Minehead, Somerset, UK: D.K. Ballance, 2007. Paperback (spiral-bound). 75 copies. Obtainable from the author (cheque payable to him for £14.00 includes UK p.&p.) at Flat 2, Dunboyne, Bratton Lane, Minehead, Somerset TA24 8SQ.

This report chronicles bird records from 153 circuits completed by the author in two Exmoor combes between August 2000 and February 2007. It is an impressive example of what can be achieved by a single skilled and determined observer working a 'local patch'.

M.G.W.

DELANY, S. & SCOTT, D. (eds) **Waterbird Population Estimates – Fourth Edition.** 239 pages, many colour photographs and maps, numerous tables. Wageningen, The Netherlands: Wetlands International, 2006. Paperback, £25.00, ISBN 90-5882-031-9 and 978-90-5882-031-0. Distributor: NHBS Environment Bookstore, website www.nhbs.com, email: customer.services@nhbs.co.uk

The astonishing cover photograph, showing part of a flock of 2.88 million Oriental Pratincoles *Glareola maldivarum* on an Australian beach in February 2004, draws the reader into this book, but also gives a strong hint of the huge task involved in 'assessing global population sizes of all waterbirds'. This fourth edition continues the improvements begun in the third (reviewed in *Ibis* 145: 524–525). The tabulated data are clearly and attractively presented. Careful reading of the introductory sections, not least 'How to use this book', is essential.

M.G.W.

DELIN, H. & SVENSSON, L. **Philip's Guide to Birds of Britain and Europe.** 320 pages, numerous colour illustrations and maps. London: Philip's, 2007. Paperback, £9.99, ISBN 978-0-540-08969-7.

This field guide derives from *The Hamlyn Guide to Birds of Britain and Europe*, which was first published in 1970, reprinted many times and went through major revisions, with the collaboration of Delin and Svensson, in 1978, 1987 and 1992. The *Philip's Guide* has much to recommend it, not least the price. It concentrates on Europe and its regular breeding birds and visitors (including the most regular vagrants), uses plates from earlier editions (Arthur Singer) and also introduces new artwork, by the authors and others. Knowing the reputation of the authors, one can be confident that the texts are first-rate. Yes, there are lots of field guides out there, but this one certainly merits close examination.

M.G.W.

GILMORE, D. **The Birds of Cardiff.** 56 pages, 19 colour photographs (including front cover), 13 line drawings, 1 map on back cover. Cardiff, UK: Glamorgan Bird Club, 2006. Paperback, £10.00 (including p.&p.) from J. Wilson, 122 Westbourne Road, Penarth CF64 3HH (cheques payable to Glamorgan Bird Club), ISBN 0-9554483-0-1 and 978-0-9554483-0-0.

This publication, more bird report than book, provides information, up to the end of 2004, on the status and distribution of 260 species (76 are regular breeders) in the Cardiff Unitary Authority, which was established in 1996 and includes the Bristol Channel island of Flat Holm.

M.G.W.

HARRISON, G., CONEY, S., GRIBBLE, F., GRIFFITHS, H.J. & WINSPEY, J. **Where to Watch Birds in the West Midlands. Third edition.** 343 pages, many black-and-white maps and line drawings. London: Christopher Helm, 2007. Paperback, £16.99, ISBN 978-07136-6419-5. Website: www.acblack.com

Over 20 new sites have been added in this revised and updated edition of a guide covering Herefordshire, Staffordshire, the former West Midlands County, Warwickshire, Worcestershire and Shropshire. The first edition was published in 1987, the second (see *Ibis* 139: 721) 10 years later.

M.G.W.

LANGSBURY, G. & OGLIVIE, M. **The Birds of Islay. A Celebration in Photographs.** 160 pages, 171 colour photographs of birds (a few others of habitats), 1 colour map. Bruichladdich, Isle of Islay, Scotland: Lochindaal Press, 2006. Paperback, £17.50 (+ £5.50 p.&p.), ISBN 0-9551146-0-8. Email contact: press@indaal.demon.co.uk

Most of the fine photographs (grouped by season) in this book are by frequent Islay visitor Gordon Langsbury. They

include the 120 regular breeders, among them Red-billed Choughs *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax* and, a special delight, genuine wild Rock Doves *Columba livia*. Malcolm Ogilvie, Islay resident, describes the island's main habitats in the Introduction and provides information on status, numbers and distribution in the photograph captions.

M.G.W.

LEDERER, R. **Amazing Birds: a Treasury of Facts and Trivia about the Avian World.** 160 pages, numerous illustrations, including photographs. London: A & C Black, 2007. Paperback, £12.99, ISBN 978-0-7136-8666-1.

The eye-catching and multifarious illustrations, good use of colour and different fonts create an Aladdin's Cave, which encourages browsing. Excellent for testing yourself and others and for devising quizzes.

M.G.W.

LYNCH, W. **Penguins of the World.** 175 pages, many colour photographs, maps. London: A & C Black, 2007. Hardback, £16.99, ISBN 978-0-7136-8711-8. Website: www.acblack.com

ROUSE, A. & RICH, T. **Penguin Life: Surviving with Style in the South Atlantic.** 160 pages, numerous photographs (most in colour). Newton Abbot, UK: David & Charles, 2007. Hardback, £9.99, \$19.99, ISBN 978-0-7153-2682-4 and 0-7153-2682-1.

ÖSTLING, B. & ÅKESSON, S. **Penguins: the Secret Lives of the World's Most Intriguing Birds.** 192 pages, many colour photographs. London: Collins, 2007. Hardback, £25.00, ISBN 0-00-724744-3 and 978-0-00-724744-8.

Wayne Lynch's book was first published (by Firefly Books) in 1997. Wonderful photographs illustrate six chapters, whose titles include 'Blueprint of a penguin' and 'Family life'.

Penguin Life does not treat all members of the Spheniscidae, just those of the Antarctic. Astonishing photographs with information-packed captions follow a brief introduction.

Originally published in Swedish as *Pingvinliv*, the third in this trio contains eight chapters ('Life in the sea', 'Food from the ocean', and so on) and the splendid large-format photographs include some double-page spreads.

Together, and each individually, these three books are a celebration of the amazingly photogenic penguins and their beautiful environment and a tribute to the passion, dedication and skill of their authors and photographers. If I had to choose, I would start with *Penguin Life* by Andy Rouse and Tracey Rich.

M.G.W.

MELLANBY, R.J. (compiler) [2007] **Project Yabello [Yabelo] 2005: Effect of Habitat Alteration on Ethiopian Endemic Birds. A joint Expedition to Southern Ethiopia by the University of Glasgow and the Ethiopian Wildlife and Natural History Society. (Unpublished report.)** 50 pages, figures (including colour and black-and-white photographs), tables. Paperback (spiral-bound). Free (send A4 s.a.e.) from Richard Mellanby, Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies, Division of Clinical Studies, University of Edinburgh, Hospital for Small Animals, Easter Bush Veterinary Centre, Roslin, Midlothian EH25 9RG, UK; email: rjm69@cam.ac.uk

This report comprises four papers, which are to be submitted for publication. The first and third papers focus on the avifauna of the Yabelo Sanctuary, the second is concerned with the distribution and habitat selection of the White-tailed Swallow *Hirundo megaensis* and the Ethiopian Bush Crow *Zavattariornis stresemanni*, while the Bush Crow's ecology is the subject of the fourth.

M.G.W.

TRIBES-BEAUDEMOLIN, S. (ed.) n.d. [2006]. **Les Animaux Disparus.** 32 pages, numerous colour plates by Julian Hume. Saint Denis (Réunion): Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle. Paperback, no price given. Contact: Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle, Jardin de l'État, Saint-Denis, Ile de La Réunion; fax 0262 21 33 93; email: museum@cg974.fr

Popular booklet containing summary accounts, by C. Mourer-Chauviré and R. Bour, of 17 extinct birds and four reptiles of Réunion island (Indian Ocean) with colour reconstructions set in the island's spectacular scenery. A few further species and the bats are mentioned in passing. Pride of place on the cover goes to the Réunion Solitaire, now known to be the ibis *Threskiornis solitaria* and not a dodo.

A.S.C.

WHITE, L. (ed.) **Good Birders Don't Wear White. 50 Tips from North America's Top Birders.** 268 pages, a few line drawings. Boston & New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2007. Paperback, \$8.95, ISBN 978-0-618-75642-1 and 0-618-75642-6.

The 50 essays offer sound advice and plenty of amusement. From the admirable 'Be a proactive conservationist' and 'Shift your focus from birding to birds', for example, to 'Clean your optics' (well, I never) and 'Hug your tour leader' (visions of tour leaders scattering to the four winds, or maybe standing and hoping).

M.G.W.

Sound recordings

HALLIDAY, A. & RANFT, R. **Bird Mimicry. (NSA CD 28.)** One audio CD, with 67 minutes of recordings and a 12-page inlay booklet. London: British Library, 2006. £9.95 from British Library Sound Archive, 96 Euston Road, London NW1 2DB or Online Bookshop at www.bl.uk, ISBN 0-7123-0529-7.

Subtitled 'a remarkable collection of imitations by birds'; and among the first 20 tracks (out of 26) of birds also. The other six tracks are of mimicry of a domestic mammal (a horse), or of humans or human activity, e.g. of Pidgin English speech in Papua New Guinea.

Recordings of those mimicked precede in 21 cases the recordings of those performing the appropriations; model followed by mimic. As might be expected, the Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*, Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris*, Northern Mockingbird *Mimus polyglottos* and Superb Lyrebird *Menura novaehollandiae* are here. Also, notably, Rüppell's Robin-Chat *Cossypha semirufa*, Lawrence's Thrush *Turdus lawrencii*, Fawn-breasted Bowerbird *Chlamydera cerviniventris*, and the Budgerigar, 'Sparkie Williams', a Geordie.

Remarkable indeed!

Jeffery Boswall

ROTHENBERG, D. **Why Birds Sing. (Terra Nova Music TN-0501.)** One CD with 63 minutes of recordings and an 8-page inlay leaflet. Newark, NJ (USA): Terra Nova Music, 2005. For information, contact website: www.whybirdssing.com; email: terranova@highlands.com

The disc is designed to accompany the book with the same title, reviewed in this issue of *Ibis*. There are 12 tracks averaging c. 5 min. Each track presents a 'live' human musician (or more than one) accompanying natural sounds. These sounds are usually of birds, either 'live' in a natural setting or in a zoo, or off a tape-recording, and the 'duets' were taped in four different countries. As an example, track 6 ('Sheer frustration, really') combines Rothenberg on clarinet with the song of George, a much-celebrated wild Prince Albert's Lyrebird *Menura alberti*. The printed notes, track by track, could have usefully been more explicit than they are, although the advice is to read the book, at least to learn what the song titles mean.

Extra ordinary.

Jeffery Boswall