Recent ornithological publications

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In return, as a service to readers, this review section of Ibis is organized and edited by Michael G. Wilson and Professor Ben Sheldon of the Edward Grey Institute, with the help of a panel of contributors. They are always grateful for offers of further assistance with reviewing, especially with foreign language titles.

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Birds in Europe (2004) (or Birds in Europe II) updates and extends the original Birds in Europe (1994; reviewed in Ibis 137: 600). In the initial work, population size and trends for every bird species in almost every European country from 1970 to 1990 were collated and presented, using these systematically to assess the conservation status of each species in Europe, and to identify priority species to be targeted for conservation action to improve their status. Birds in Europe II builds on this already impressive work by presenting the same trends from 1990 to 2000, updating each species’ conservation status. The scope of the book has been extended to include previously unavailable data from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia (so, for the first time, all European countries are included), to summarize the data from the 1994 work and to include accounts for all species, not just Species of European Conservation Concern. This means that population trends of all wild bird species in the continent for the past three decades are now elegantly and clearly presented in a single reference volume.

This comprehensive and extremely impressive work identifies some worrying trends: 43% of Europe’s 526 bird species have an Unfavourable conservation status compared with 38% of 511 species of equivalent status identified in the 1994 work. However, the news was not all bad and in particular, a handful of species, such as Eurasian Griffon Vulture Gyps fulvus, switched from Unfavourable to Favourable conservation status following sustained conservation efforts. The authors also identify patterns to indicate where conservation effort is most needed, both in suites of species with common characteristics and similar trends, and in groups of countries which require most action to protect their birds. Two notable species groups are steppic species (species such as Pallid Harrier Circus

In this comprehensive account birds of Europe, the editors emphasize the importance of the matrix surrounding protected areas, the need for more effective monitoring, and the need for a more balanced assessment of the status of European birds. The book presents detailed species accounts, which have been shortened to be included in the book and for the long-term trends to be included. However, the updated version of *Birds in Europe* is more focused on its main objective of providing population size and trend information. In an accompanying website (http://birdsineurope.birdlife.org), providing a pdf of each species account, is now available. The relevant species factsheet from the website may satisfy the reader who is only interested in a single species or a handful of species. However, if you are a researcher, conservation practitioner, an environmental policy-maker or just an interested reader looking for the most up-to-date overview of general population trends, population size and conservation status of European birds, then you need this book.

**Fiona J. Sanderson**

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In just one part of Honduras, the Three-wattled Bellbird *Procnias tricarunculatus* has six local names, some of which relate to the seasonal changes which the bird indicates, such as the ripening of coffee cherries. The bird epitomizes the way local people interpret their landscape and take an interest in the avifauna. The book describes how a landscape that many would see as ‘trashed’ can remain important for many birds, and illustrates the ways birds are treated by local people. This forms a useful addition to the debate regarding the importance, and management, of the matrix surrounding more natural and strictly protected areas. The author combines ethnographic recording with ornithology – an unusual combination of skills. Stories are presented about the way various people like or dislike birds, including small householders, large landowners and ranchers, and rural and urban dwellers. There are the sadly familiar stories of boys with slingshots killing anything that flies, who grow up to be perhaps rather more selective hunters. It is not just pigeons and gamebirds, but woodpeckers, parrots and owls that are eaten. The book documents other relationships with birds, from pre-Columbian times to the present. Some birds were or are valued for their feathers or songs, and several are popular pets. Others have religious significance. Some are or were considered medicinal: it was believed that the ash of vulture feathers could cure syphilis, or that vulture droppings are useful for the bad-tempered. Some children believe that eating the heart of a hummingbird will improve their aim with a slingshot.

The book focuses on Honduras’ largest province, Olancho, in which there are some 600 bird species. Little remains of the natural habitats, including tropical dry forest. Secondary forest is acknowledged to be very important, but the book emphasizes the value of anthropogenic habitats such as gardens, coffee plantations, rice paddies, burnt pine–oak woodlands and thorn-scrub on ranches. Indeed, the thorn-scrub is now the only habitat of the country’s sole endemic bird, the Honduran Emerald (Hummingbird) *Amazilia luciae*.

The author emphasizes that all is not lost for wildlife in landscapes modified or created by humans. Although it is not stressed, there are similar stories in other regions, for example in Britain, where various taxa have opportunistically benefited from the cultural landscape. Some birds may indeed cope with or benefit from ecological degradation, whereas others, often less mobile or more specialized taxa presumably may not, and it can be as dangerous to overplay the importance of habitats created by humans as it is to ignore them. In my view, the book gives insufficient weight to this more balanced assessment.

This well-written book provides a good range of examples to illustrate the value and management of the matrix between reserves, including further evidence of the need to cater for altitudinal migration. Mark Bonta, through his patient observations, demonstrates that there are long been people in Central America who love or are fascinated by birds, and that ‘ornithophilia’ can be fostered to achieve low-cost conservation of certain species. Kept in perspective, this is a very worthwhile case-study.

**Clive Hambler**

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Among birds, grebes are pretty much in a league of their own. With their floating nests, they are able, more than any other type of bird, to avoid solid ground. Their thick plumage, a pelage almost (the ‘grebe-furs’ appreciated by humans too), is up to a watery life. Grebes have made a habit of eating their own feathers, especially the long flank feathers in which they wrap food-remains in the stomach, and cough them up and out. They have highly seasonally dimorphic plumages but are sexually monomorphic. They
show complex, highly ritualized and eye-catching, sexually symmetric displays. They have no tails, peculiarly lobe-toed feet, and a nice soft musky smell.

Whether it is because they are only locally common, or because they are so out of the ordinary in habits and form, students of grebe biology sometimes seem as much in a league of their own as the grebes themselves. Just like grebes, ‘grebologists’ are rarely social, and there have not been many grebe-meetings (I know of just one). As pointed out by Fjeldså, many of the classic scientific papers on grebes were published as ‘comprehensive reports in illustrious publication series by old academic institutions or local ornithological societies’ or in the ‘grey literature’. Even those that are published as cut-and-dried papers in international peer-reviewed journals are not often cited. Is it not telling that apparently no one of the competitive guild of molecular cladists has staked out grebes as their territory? Grebes and their biology deserve better, as these birds have lots to offer as peculiar ornithological ‘model systems’. For all of these reasons, it is great that an easily accessible, attractive, near-comprehensive and truly eye-opening book summarizing the biology of grebes has seen the light of day, and all the more annoying therefore that only the most dedicated and well-off bibliophiles and grebe-lovers can be expected to come up with the approximately 160 Euros at which OUP has put Jon Fjeldså’s book on the market. This won’t help to get grebes off their scientific island.

Although following the general structure of the ‘Bird Families of the World’ series, The Grebes is somewhat idiosyncratic, with its wonderful whirling sketches of the birds, the peculiar types of graphs and maps and the choice of narrative. It is all very much ‘Jon Fjeldså’s book’, and I mean this as a compliment. The author’s illustrations alone make this book a classic. The story of grebes is told in three parts, the first part being a consideration of a diving style of life and the convergent evolution shown by grebes and divers (Gaviidae). Nowadays, it is well established that grebes and divers are not related. It is thought rather that grebes and flamingoes (Phoenicopteridae) are sister-groups: an interesting point to think about. They might both have evolved from rail-like birds, skulking around in reeds and marshes some 40 million years ago. It is suggested that the serrated edge of the grebe-tarsus evolved as a tool to ‘cut stalks of lax waterweeds’.

The second part is a general introduction to grebes alone, and perhaps it was unavoidable that there is some overlap with the first part. The ecological and morphological dichotomy is outlined between the stocky and short-billed species living on larvae of aquatic arthropods (e.g. dab-chicks Tachyaptus, pied-billed grebes Podilymbus; the primitive group) and the slender-bodied and long-billed species living on pelagic fish (several species of plumed grebes Podiceps; the derived group). I found it an eye-opener to discover that grebes are virtually absent from the Amazon Basin, one of the biggest aquatic ecological infrastructures in the world. Fjeldså suggests that grebes there have been outcompeted by many different tropical guilds of fish. That fish and grebes often compete for invertebrate food resources is well established. The few cases of character-displacement patterns in bill-size among grebes (cases that have failed to reach textbook-example status) point in the same direction of food competition. The third part consists of competent species accounts, summarizing our current knowledge of each of the world’s 22 extant species.

Grebes are great, grebes are wonderful, grebes have so much new biology to offer. The role of intra- and extra-guild food competition and the cases of character displacement warrant further study, while the evolution of their ritualized displays in the context of mutual sexual selection could be a hot topic too. Their chicks’ long dependence on parental care elicits strong sibling competition: why not study these interactions in situations where they are highly visible? Their role as intermediate hosts for many different flukes and tapeworms has earned them a place on the current bandwagon of parasites-and-bird-life-history studies. Fjeldså’s The Grebes can be read as an ornithological or evolutionary wake-up call. I just hope it will be heard.

**Theunis Piersma**


The Canadian novelist Graeme Gibson has here brought together a personal selection of more than 100 writings from around the world, covering the many different ways in which humans have engaged with birds. As he was a latecomer to birdwatching, the author’s selection owes more to his wide literary background than to mainstream ornithological literature. Indeed, only a third of the selection concerns particular species, pride of place going to the Common Raven Corvus corax with seven pieces, while the remainder is a mixture of poems, folktales and other writings, their length ranging from a few lines to several pages.

The book is divided into nine sections with such unusual titles as ‘Birds we use, eat, wear and sell’, ‘Avian defence and flying nightmares’, ‘Bird companions’ and ‘Sinister auspices’. All have novelties: an account by Saki (H.H. Munro), written shortly before his death in World War I, of the many Rooks, Kestrels and Partridges in his part of the Western Front; of John Wesley’s interest in a tame Raven that would show distress if separated from the dog with which it was bonded; of a woman who used the high temperature of her husband dying of tuberculosis to hatch out 46 hens’ eggs!

If only a minority of the writings refer to real birds, most of the many illustrations do. These include fine plates by Audubon, Keulemans and Richter. The book is fully referenced, very well produced, and a pleasure to read or browse; it is just what it claims – a bedside book.

**Leo Kinlen**
Birds of Two Worlds arose out of a conference of the same name organized in 2002 by the Smithsonian Institution to synthesize recent research on the ecology and evolution of migrating birds. It comprises 33 chapters from 73 authors arranged in sections on ‘The Evolution of Migration’, ‘Adaptations for Two Worlds’, ‘Biogeography’, ‘Connectivity’, ‘Migration Itself’, ‘Behavioural Ecology’ and ‘Population Ecology’, each introduced by a concise ‘overview’. From the wide range of topics covered, the editors are right to sense a renaissance in migratory bird biology, with new theory generating new questions and modern techniques being used to re-examine old ones. For example, advances in stable isotope and molecular genetic techniques are beginning to reveal, more effectively than sparse ringing returns have hitherto been able, the ‘connectivity’ between the breeding and wintering areas of different populations. Connectivity is of importance both to our understanding of ‘carry-over effects’, by which events in one area during one part of the annual cycle may influence population dynamics thousands of kilometres away at another time of year, and by helping conservationists identify where vulnerable migrants spend time, and the threats they may face there. Technical advances also mean we know much more about the physiology of individual birds during migration itself, from gut function and refuelling rates on stopover to decision-making when aloft. Better comparative data now permit us to investigate the ecological correlates of the different social systems migrants adopt, and the morphological and behavioural adaptations by which migrants face the different challenges of breeding and wintering areas, balancing flexibility in exploring new habitats with the specialization necessary to exploit them effectively.

The ‘Two Worlds’ of the title refers to the very different ecological circumstances that long-distance migrants encounter at the ends of their journeys, yet it also resonates at another level: as a comparison between the ecology of migrants in the Nearctic–Neotropical system, which was inevitably the bias of a meeting held in North America, and that of migrants in the Palearctic–Afrotropical system, which was the focus of most European contributors to this volume. The two migration systems have evolved rather differently because of each system’s unique biogeographical history and avifaunal inheritance, and research by ornithologists either side of the Atlantic has also followed rather different trajectories, as each has been favoured by different opportunities or constrained by others. Comparisons between Old and New World systems pervade the book and, because the taxa that dominate each system are only distantly related, they can be robust, suggesting several areas where new insights and advances can be made. The cross-fertilization of ideas that this book brings out gives much to reflect on. A predecessor volume from the first meeting on migrants organized by the Smithsonian 25 years ago, Migrant Birds in the Neotropics: Ecology, Behaviour, Distribution and Conservation (Keast & Morton 1980; reviewed in Ibis 123: 378–379), became one of the most cited bird-books generated by a scientific conference. Birds of Two Worlds is a worthy successor to join it.

Peter Jones


This pocket-handbook discusses all that is known about Bougainville’s birds, updating the author’s out-of-print Birds of the North Solomons (1981). It covers the large mountainous island of Bougainville and the scatter of tiny islands, which together comprise the North Solomons province of Papua New Guinea. It is aimed primarily at Bougainvillean beginners, but will also be valued by many itinerant ornithologists and those addicted to photographing rare birds. The content varies widely, from wide-ranging introductions for each bird family to detailed field notes on the endemic birds. Those making only a brief visit, and well-informed students, might find an excess of background information and anecdotal observations, but the species accounts combine the immediacy of personal discoveries with unique ornithological data. Each resident species is discussed in detail, while seabirds, waders and other migrants are treated more succinctly: a total of 188 species. Most species are illustrated with good photographs, but those Solomons endemics yet to be photographed are represented by 25 attractive paintings. The 199 photographs update and augment those in Coates’ two-volume The Birds of Papua New Guinea (1985–90) and Birds of New Guinea and the Bismarck Archipelago (2001; see Ibis 144: 537–538), and include species photographed only once or twice before, such as Imitator Sparrowhawk Accipiter imitator, Bougainville’s Thicket-Warbler Cichlornis (Megalurus) llaneae and the still-undescribed Odidi (perhaps a warbler of the genus Cetta). The book has 20 pages of background, 210 pages of species accounts, 30 pages of local stories, 26 pages of local names and 15 pages of appendices and index. It is published to a high standard, including a laminated cover and clear maps inside the covers.

The local stories and names may seem of little relevance to outsiders, but offer an opportunity to see birds from a local perspective and allow visitors to engage much more fully with local guides. Don Hadden has spent seven years teaching on Bougainville and researching its birds, and this book is aimed at local students. Very few Pacific Islanders have developed a scientific interest in birds and it will be instructive for the rest of the region to see whether this
book will foster much local interest. For visitors, the island's birds are among the most interesting, yet least known, in the Pacific, a situation compounded by the mountains remaining off-limits since 1989. However, in 2005, there were six titles in the BSAVA list. In 1996 came the first edition of the Manual of Psittacine Birds, 2nd edition. 323 pages, many figures (including colour and black-and-white photographs and line-drawings) and tables. Quedgeley, Gloucestershire: BSAVA, 2005. Paperback, £89.00, ISBN 0-905214-76-5.

The British Small Animal Veterinary Association (BSAVA) has, for many years, produced manuals for veterinary surgeons in general practice, either to cover subjects not well represented in the university course, or to provide greater depth of knowledge in specialist subjects. Avian medicine has very limited cover in UK veterinary schools, partly through pressures on the very full curriculum, and partly through a (perceived) misunderstanding of the economic value of birds in aviculture.

There is no doubt that birds (and other ‘exotic’ species) form a large percentage of the caseload of the average UK veterinary practice, and that advances in knowledge in avian medicine and surgery have been dramatic in the last 20 years. At the time of the release of the Manual of Parrots, Budgerigars and other Psittacine Birds in 1968, there were six titles in the BSAVA list. In 1966 came the first edition of the Manual of Psittacine Birds, and now, with this second edition of 2005, there are 29 other Manuals on various subjects.

Although obviously directed at practising veterinary surgeons wishing to increase their knowledge of avian medicine, this volume would be of undoubted interest to anyone involved in caring for birds. Although many different authors have contributed (myself included for one chapter), the production and editing make it easy to read and to understand, with style consistency throughout. Cross-referencing is good, with neither duplication nor contradiction of viewpoints. The subject matter may be 'dipped into' at will, as the need for specific information arises.

The greatest change in this Manual over its predecessors lies in the vastly increased number and quality of colour pictures, as well as some excellent line-drawings and tables. The Manual consists of five sections. The first deals with understanding the 'normal' psittacine bird, covering the range of species and their natural history; their anatomy and physiology (important, as there are major significant differences from mammals); husbandry and avicultural methods; and handling techniques. The second section discusses the basics of clinical presentation, covering the initial assessment and treatment of the sick or injured bird, followed by everyday techniques such as injections, sampling, clipping, etc. There is a useful chapter on clinical pathology, describing the range of simple procedures that may be performed in the practice or field laboratory. The section is completed with details of anaesthesia and diagnostic imaging. Anaesthetic agents in birds today are very different and much safer than they were even 10 years ago, and simple radiography now goes along with ultrasound, endoscopy and MRI as common diagnostic aids.

The two chapters in Part 3 (surgical techniques) were written by acknowledged experts in the UK avian veterinary world and present comprehensive, yet concise and readily understood information on soft-tissue and orthopaedic/break surgery.

The largest section covers disease syndromes in groups, and differs from earlier volumes by not detailing specific infections. It deals with the systems affected, such as gastrointestinal, respiratory, reproductive and integument, as they would be presented to the practitioner. This section starts with the most common cause of illness in captive parrots – poor nutrition – and ends with a very useful chapter on the sick small bird. Although applicable directly to parakeets in this Manual, the information presented has much relevance to many varieties of small bird.

The fifth section covers legal, ethical and zoonotic aspects of parrots – increasingly important in this litigious age, and particularly relevant, with recent scares on avian influenza, and the important zoonosis psittacosis ('parrot fever').

Finally, another great strength of this volume is the appendix containing a number of valuable tables, diagnostic flow-charts, bird names and a drug formulary with dose rates.

This Manual is extremely well produced, provides readable access to valuable information on a large group of distinctive birds and, apart from being a must for every small animal veterinary practice in the country, it would make an important addition to the shelves of any serious parrot-keeper or rescue group, or those interested in the zoology, nursing or medical problems of any bird. The wealth of information provided can be used throughout aviculture.

Guy Dutson


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Alan K. Jones


This is an admirably detailed account of the birds recorded since the 1950s in a complicated site. It lies at the confluence of the Rivers Lee and Stort, just in Hertfordshire, but bordering...
on Essex, and on the northern fringe of the London recording area. A sewage farm was started in 1956, the Ringing Group was founded in 1962 and the RSPB has been involved since the early 1970s. There have been many habitat changes, both within the site and in the surrounding area, where new gravel pits have provided rival attractions.

Numbers of each species from 1960 to 2000 are illustrated by histograms, arrival and departure dates by graphs, and ringing recoveries by maps. A good introduction describes the earlier history of the site, as well as the recent changes. There are some pleasantly delicate drawings by the first author. The whole work is perhaps the most detailed treatment ever to be published of a small British inland site other than a reservoir, and it should be consulted by anyone attempting a local or county ornithology for southeast England. It is not an easy read. Why is the text left unjustified? Too many people seem to have gathered round a computer, among whom none exerted competent control over the loose syntax and the weak punctuation. Key words are irritatingly repeated in both sentences and paragraphs, and essential hyphens (as in 'post-breeding') are virtually absent. Such defects are only too apparent now in survey reports by young ecologists, but more care ought to have been taken in a published work.

David K. Ballance


Under the mystifying title ‘Does the Cuckoo have a chance to survive?’ the author summarizes his lifelong interest in Common Cuckoos Cuculus canorus and presents a follow-up to the oological studies started in the 1950s by his father, W.P.J. Hellebrekers, a well-known egg-collector in The Netherlands (published in Limo 26–30, 1953–57).

The book essentially covers two subjects: (a) reliability of mapping as a method to assess the number of territories (and population size in its wake) and (b) the evolution of host–parasite interactions. The latter subject is examined mainly on the basis of work undertaken before the 1950s (Groebbels, Friedmann, Jourdain, Baker, Makatsch), whereas the upsurge in experimental work by evolutionary ecologists since the 1990s is ignored. This part is outdated, and as Hellebrekers’ own ideas on coevolution are neither clearly formulated (the Cuckoo as a company with various branches and subsidiaries; egg discrimination learnt from parents and stimulated by congeners) nor embedded in recent findings, it makes for an idiosyncratic read.

In the first section of the book, however, Hellebrekers makes a good point about mapping (and hence monitoring). For anyone having studied breeding birds by searching for and checking nests, mapping must be a strange activity indeed. This is true for birds with a relatively simple territorial system, but even more so for others, like the Cuckoo, with complex, sex-specific activities covering large areas and several habitats. Based on species known as hosts in The Netherlands, their parasitism rates (mostly data collected in the first half of the 20th century), the average number of eggs laid per female Cuckoo (between early May and early July), the number of territories of hosts (based on mapping) and the host-specific number of clutches produced annually, Hellebrekers calculates the expected number of Cuckoo females. The outcome is at variance with the number of mapped male Cuckoos. If census and atlas data had been used as in the past, the most recent Dutch Breeding Bird Atlas (1998–2000) would have resulted in some 18,000 ‘territories’; the calculation following Hellebrekers comes up with 6000–8000 females. Mapping problems are also likely to account for the indication that Dutch Cuckoo trends have been stable or only slightly declining since the start of standardized breeding bird surveys in the mid-1980s. In fact, the Cuckoo is in steep decline, having virtually disappeared from the open countryside and woodland within a few decades. This decline probably dates from well before the 1980s, as Hellebrekers provides data on Cuckoo eggs found in the 1950s that are stupendous for us mortals who started fieldwork in the late 1960s. A similar exercise is attempted for the UK.

As to the question in the title: the widespread loss of formerly abundant host species from the Dutch landscape is likely to have a negative impact on some Cuckoo gentes (named ‘clans’ by Hellebrekers) more than others. Taken as a whole, this highly personal account, in places resulting in pages-long diatribes, is interesting for Dutch readers, showing a glimpse of the past and hinting at glaring discrepancies between mapping and searching for nests.

Rob G. Bijlsma


Steven Hilty is well known for his two impressive and extremely detailed avifaunal reviews for Colombia and Venezuela (see Ibis 130: 136 and 145: 519–520). Sandwiched between these publications is this Birds of Tropical America. I acquired the book originally in the mid 1990s and, after reading it, lent it to a friend whose dog ‘ate’ it; yes, for all you teachers out there, it seems the written word is on our canine friends’ menu after all. I tried to replace it, only to find the book, first published in 1994,
had gone out of print almost as soon as it had appeared in the UK. Its reappearance in a new edition is therefore most welcome. I can also understand why it has been reprinted; it is an excellent piece of writing aimed at those Neotropical enthusiasts who wish to understand a bit more about the wonders of the Neotropical avifauna rather than merely accumulating new species for their lists. Written in a pleasing anecdotal style, it will appeal to amateur and professional alike.

The new edition has updated references and an epilogue, in which the author reviews his musings on earlier research into some of the fascinating conundrums in Neotropical bird biology. For example, a chapter entitled ‘Cold Reality: Highland Hummingbirds’ explains just how hummingbirds of the High Andes such as Chalcostigma species can cope with life at 4500 m, when the humans attempting to observe them can neither breathe properly nor keep warm. Other chapters deal with species diversity, Amazonian biogeography, tropical migrations, multispecies flocking, birds at ant swarms, fruit eating, tropical river islands as habitats, as well as many other interestingly. Interestingly, the author outlines in the Epilogue that in fact very few of his conclusions from the earlier edition require fine-tuning, a testament to his and others’ previous research into the many fascinating areas of Neotropical ornithology. The text is enlivened by Mimi Hoppe Wolf’s pleasant line-drawings, but I feel the main strength of the book is the immensely personal experience of the author continually shining through the prose and enhancing what is a thoroughly pleasing read, just perfect for the long flight to Rio, Sao Paulo, Lima or wherever.

Graeme Green


The scope of Little Birds and Elephants is largely encapsulated by its subtitle: ‘The diaries and short stories of David Macpherson’s wanderings in Portuguese East Africa and Nyasaland 1928–29’. To this, the editor, his daughter Isabel, has added an introductory biographical sketch and appreciations from people who knew him and his family well, a brief summary by J.G.M. Wilson of knowledge of the White-winged Apalis Apalis chariessa macphersoni, the type specimens of which were collected by David Macpherson in 1933, and reproductions of some watercolours of birds in their habitats painted by the artist J.C. Harrison while staying at the Macpherson farm in Malawi. The whole forms an attractive, well-produced and nicely illustrated package, which contains information of real ornithological interest.

Born in Scotland in 1900, David Macpherson emigrated while young to the then Nyasaland, where he would become a tobacco farmer and remain until his death in 1982. To raise capital to purchase a farm lease, he spent 18 months in the late 1920s hunting elephants in areas of modern Malawi and Mozambique that, even this recently, remained remote and poorly known. From the beginning of the period covered by his diary, he began to develop an ornithological interest, which would generate substantial skin and egg collections, from which just under 300 skins are now split between the collections of The Natural History Museum (NHM) and the University Museum of Zoology, Cambridge (UMZC); the whereabouts of his egg collection and the residue of his skin collection remain unclear. His wider ornithological contributions included acting as sponsor to The Birds of Malawi, the important 1977 volume by C.W. & F.M. Benson.

The diary entries in Little Birds and Elephants well reveal the complexities of developing ornithological field skills in a remote African environment in the pre field-guide era, when collection of specimens was a sine qua non for documenting the avifauna of a region, and they include interesting natural history anecdotes. For someone then living off the land while making money shooting elephants, it...
may seem surprising how Macpherson worries about the ethics of specimen collecting, notably as regards what both humanitarians and sportsmen would think of his shooting nesting or roosting birds. His justification includes: ‘It is worse than useless taking eggs if you don’t know what the kind (of bird) was who laid them and only leads to further puzzles in the future’ (p. 99), a statement which may strike a chord with many scientific users of museum collections. How easy it is to be misled is revealed in another entry (from 5 November 1928) in which he describes collecting a flycatcher, which from its behaviour ‘… looked as if it had just flown off its nest’ (p. 119), and subsequently finding what he assumed was its nest and eggs nearby. A seemingly reasonable deduction, except that the specimen, now in the NHM, was later identified as Spotted Flycatcher Muscicapa striata, a Palaearctic migrant.

Access to any museum collector’s field diaries is a major benefit to subsequent researchers. Of roughly 60 specimens from the period covered by this diary that are now in the NHM and UMIZC collections, the obtaining of two-thirds of them is explicitly covered by diary entries that frequently provide ancillary information to that on the specimen labels. Both for the student of African ornithology and for the more general reader on life and travel in a relatively recent but much different Africa, the book is well worth perusal.

Robert Prys-Jones


This substantial avifauna is subtitled ‘A nature guide to the avifauna of an inner Alpine region’, though at 1.5 kg it is not intended to be carried in an Alpine rucksack. A ‘disadvantage’ of such Swiss books is, of course, that much text is repeated in several languages; here many summaries as well as indexes and bird names are in German, French, Italian, English and two dialects of Romansch, but for the desktop or armchair it is an admirable avifauna and a model of its kind. The only slight complaint that might be allowed is that the quality of some of the (small) bird photographs is not very high, although it is praiseworthy that virtually all of them were either taken in the study area or nearby; the many habitat photographs in the introductory chapters are excellent.

The T-shaped area under consideration is one of the most popular holiday regions of southern Switzerland, contained within the canton Graubünden/Grisons: the Upper Engadine valley of the river Inn on its way to Austria, the dramatic southwest extension of this valley, better known as the Bregaglia, ending at the Italian border, and the Poschiavo valley, which heads off southeast, also into Italy, from near the resort of St. Moritz halfway along this line. The study area contains parts of two IBAs, harbouring 11 species for which Switzerland has special responsibility as more than 5% of their European populations are within its borders. Eight introductory chapters account for the first 123 pages: a history of ornithological research in the region; the study area; biogeography of Alpine birds; montane regions as an avian habitat; the habitats and their breeding birds; migration and overwintering; changes to the avifauna in historical times; and biological and ecological research on the birds of the study area. There are also six information-packed appendices. Simple birdwatching has not been ignored either, with 21/2 pages of tips on the best places to see birds throughout the year (though only in German). The altitude in the region ranges from 400 to 4049 m, and the habitats from vineyards through forests to the alpine meadows and snowfields of the peaks. Between St. Moritz and the Maloja Pass are some large but shallow-edged lakes, a rather unusual thing in the Alps, which greatly contribute to the study area’s substantial list of 299 bird species, 120 of them breeders. Since 1965, 24 breeding species have increased in numbers (principally waterbirds, forest species, and those in settlements, among them Peregrine Falcon Falco peregrinus, Hazel Grouse Bonasa bonasia, Little Ringed Plover Charadrius dubius, Black Woodpecker Dryocopus martius, Fieldfare Turdus pilaris and European Serin Serinus serinus), and 14 have decreased (especially Ring Ouzel Turdus torquatus, Whinchat Saxicola rubetra and Citril Finch Serinus citrinella, while the local populations of Red-billed Chough Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax and Ortolan Bunting Emberiza hortulana have been extinguished). The re-introduction of Lammergeier Gypaetus barbatus in the wider region seems to have been successful, with 16 breeding pairs in the Alps in 2004, including five in or around the Swiss National Park on the eastern border of the area dealt with here.

Factors negatively affecting breeding birds are winter sports and other aspects of tourism, an increasing tendency to fertilize lower-lying mountain meadows to increase milk yields, forestry work in the breeding season, or the first mowing of the characteristic Swiss hay meadows to increase milk yields, forestry work in the breeding season, or the first mowing of the characteristic Swiss hay meadows being carried out ever earlier in the year. Strict shooting controls are generally obeyed, but the numbers of Black Grouse Tetrao tetrix taken annually are now thought to be unsustainable. The population dynamics of selected species are examined in admirable detail in the last of the introductory chapters mentioned above.

Following the Swiss breeding atlas (1998), the national ornithological station, Vogelwarte Sempach, is to be congratulated yet again on producing a near-perfect volume that is required reading for anyone with an interest in Alpine birds.

Brian Hillcoat


Although it might seem unfortunate that two biographies of Audubon should have appeared in 2004, after a lapse since the last, Audubon by John Chancellor (1978), of nearly 30 years, these two books are very different, and will take their useful place among several Audubonian books on more specific topics that have been published recently. These include excellent books by John Chalmers on Audubon in Edinburgh (2003; see Ibis 146: 183) and Duff Hart-Davis on Audubon’s struggles to produce The Birds of America (Audubon’s Elephant, also 2003), the beautifully illustrated John James Audubon in the West by Sarah Boehme (2000), and two books about Audubon prints (S.M. Low’s A guide to Audubon’s Birds of America, 2002 and Audubon Art Prints by B. Steiner, 2003). Altogether, the old woodsman is having quite a revival.

Richard Rhodes turned to writing a biography of Audubon after winning a Pulitzer Prize for producing The Making of the Atomic Bomb and two books on violence and mass killing. No wonder that The Making of an American gives us such a glorious evocation of the beauties of Wilderness America through Audubon’s eyes, and that Rhodes obviously became so fond of the fellow. It is a pleasure to walk with the great ornithologist as he becomes alive on the page before us, and Rhodes has also produced a work of scholarship which gives us much new information. The book is well illustrated (although the pictures are often not captioned) and the Minion typeface makes it a delight to read.

William Souder has adopted a more journalistic style, and has included much more information about other, associated, naturalists such as Alexander Wilson. Indeed, the first part of Souder’s book flips chronologically between accounts of Wilson and Audubon’s lives, which is useful and interesting, but not what you would expect; nor do you expect long digressions into the geography of the Ohio River and its tributaries, or the behaviour of turkeys, however fascinating.

Nevertheless, Souder has done his homework on Audubon, and his list of sources is even longer than Rhodes’, although it is a shame he has again raised the old chestnut of an idea that Audubon’s ‘Bird of Washington’ was an individual of an otherwise unknown species (it was an immature Bald Eagle Haliaeetus leucocephalus). Sadly, there are no colour plates in Souder’s book, and only 17 black-and-white illustrations; how difficult to appreciate the mastery and genius of Audubon without being shown the glorious pattern of red and yellow on the heads of a flock of Carolina Parakeets Conuropsis carolinensis feeding on cockleburs, or how the well-defined white markings show up against the rich carmine crest of a male Ivory-billed Woodpecker Campephilus principalis (a bird which reminded Audubon of Vandyke’s portrait of James Stuart). Reproductions of both plates can be enjoyed in Rhodes’ biography.

Each book adds to our knowledge of Mr Audubon, Frenchman, American, Fellow of the Royal Society of London, shopkeeper, sawmill owner, painter of nudes and theatre scenery, teacher of dance, teller of stories, hunter, naturalist, taxidermist, wildlife painter of genius.

Clemency Fisher


This bilingual book describes the coastal avifauna of a country which has fallen beneath the ornithological radar recently, but happily seems to be regaining some ground as a potential site for both birdwatching trips and formal research. There are undoubtedly superb birds to be seen in the Surinamese hinterland (see, for example, the chapter on Suriname in Chasing Neotropical Birds, reviewed in this issue of Ibis); unfortunately, the avifauna of the coastal strip comprises mainly widespread, common residents of the region, and migrant waders. However, as a means to enthuse local people – and most Surinamese do live in the coastal-belt – this book could prove invaluable. The introductory chapters discuss the coastal morphology, landscape and birds, the timing of breeding, and ‘Residents, wanderers and migrants’, and the species texts describe the 100 commonest coastal birds, each with a competent colour illustration. The final two chapters deal with conservation issues, and where to watch birds in the area, respectively. This is a worthwhile publication, which will appeal to the local readership for which I am sure it is intended, but will probably be of limited interest outside this fascinating country.

Graeme Green

TALIBOV [TALYBOV], T. [Conservation of the Vertebrate Gene Pool in the Autonomous Republic of Nakhich- 

Nakhichevan, formerly an Autonomous S.S.R., now an Autonomous District and with the spelling Naxçıvan, is part of the former Soviet republic of Azerbaijan. It lies southwest of the main part of the country and is separated by a corridor of Armenian territory extending south to the border with Iran. The bird section (pp. 40–62) of this slim
This book represents what may be a dying genre, the travelogue based around bird photography. The Internet now contains so many websites illustrated with brilliant, professional-standard avian images that this kind of publication may become the dinosaur of bird-book publishing. This would perhaps be a shame, because I enjoyed reading about the travels of the husband-and-wife team to some well-known, and one or two not quite so well-known Neotropical birding hotspots. The writing style, however, is not to my taste, but perfectly acceptable nevertheless, although I found Bob Thornton’s occasional use of the word ‘sidekick’ whilst referring to his wife somewhat grating; on this side of ‘The Pond’, an errant husband using such an epithet would perhaps be treated to one! Before talking about the main strength of the book, the photographs, I think it’s a shame that scientific names are not referred to anywhere; I can understand a reluctance to place them in non-scientific text, but an appendix listing them would have been perfectly acceptable, as well as extremely useful.

The photographs are the raison d’être of the book. There are 116 species depicted, mainly from Central America and northern South America. Most are excellent, the gorgeous Saffron Toucanet Baillonius bailloni on the cover being one example, and some photographs portray species that are extremely rare and hard to observe. The pictures of Black-crowned Antpitta Pittasoma michleri, Wing-banded Antbird Myrmornis torquata and Rufous-vented Ground-Cuckoo Neomorphus Geoffroyi are particularly galling to the reviewer, his having failed spectacularly on many occasions to see any of these three superb species. A good mix of common and rare species should give the Neotropical enthusiast much to enjoy in this book and, for those observers lucky enough to have visited some of the areas described, no doubt some very happy memories too. Some helpful hints on photography and travel, including many addresses and contact details for agencies dealing with travel and conservation in the region, are further admirable features.

Graeme Green


With the Pacific on the west, the desert in the east, and the coastal lowlands and mountains in between, San Diego County, located in the extreme southwest corner of the United States, boasts a list of more than half the bird species recorded in North America. Although the title suggests the book is another California county-level breeding bird atlas, it is much more. It is, in fact, an updated and expanded publication of Unitt’s The Birds of San Diego County (San Diego Society of Natural History Memoir 13, 1984), treating 493 species plus 87 additional subspecies, and incorporating findings made during a 5-year breeding and winter survey. In addition, there are paragraphs on conservation issues and concerns for most species, and an enlightening discussion of the subspecies recorded. Records of exotics and undocumented sightings are treated briefly after the species accounts, and the ‘Literature Cited’ lists nearly 800 books and papers (single records published in birding journals are cited in the species accounts).

The accounts vary in length from a couple of short paragraphs for vagrants such as Cook’s Petrel Pterodroma cookii, to more than three pages for regularly occurring species with multiple subspecies such as Fox Sparrow Passerella iliaca. Each account starts with an introductory paragraph generalizing the species’ status and habitat preference in San Diego, followed by paragraphs detailing breeding, nesting, migration, and winter status and distribution. Each account concludes with a paragraph devoted to conservation, and most also include a discussion on taxonomy.

Data used to determine breeding and winter status and distribution were obtained primarily from breeding and winter surveys conducted during the 5-year period between 1997 and 2002. For these surveys, the County was divided into 479 ‘squares’ averaging about 23 km² each. Then, with more than 400 volunteers, and a goal of obtaining records made during at least 25 observer-hours in each ‘square’ each year, in both summer and winter, the entire County was censused, and the information synthesized. Most species accounts contain a map showing abundance in each ‘square’ in summer and winter, and many accounts have a chart showing nesting schedules.

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Migration data include early and late arrival and departure dates for both spring and autumn, along with numbers present at times of peak migration, and routes followed. Conservation discussion includes adaptation, or lack thereof, by each species to the increasing impact of human activity on the environment in an area where the human population is increasing at third-world rates, with consumption at first-world rates. Unitt’s in-depth treatment of taxonomy follows a sensible and modern application of the subspecies concept, rejecting poorly defined taxa, while strongly supporting well-defined subspecies.

Unitt’s editing skills are evident throughout the book. His highly readable writing style is refreshing, and the inclusion of photographs for each species, along with the maps and charts, breaks up the text. If errors exist, they are few and far between, and minor in nature. Ornithologists and conservationists alike with interests in the status and taxonomy of birds, not only in San Diego County, but in the whole of California and the southwestern United States will find much of value in this book. It is highly recommended.

Guy McCaskie


Madagascar has been isolated geologically for tens of millions of years. Following independence from France, the island suffered through a period of political isolation as well, which served only to heighten the interest of evolutionary biologists in Madagascar’s unique biota. Fortunately, recent years have seen an opening of opportunities for researchers to visit Madagascar, and there has been a subsequent ‘boom’ in evolutionary and ecological studies.

Satoshi Yamagishi was one of the first to take advantage of these new opportunities. He arrived in Madagascar in 1991, eager to begin studies of the largest endemic radiation of Malagasy birds, the vangas (Vangidae). Fortuitously, during the initial field season, Yamagishi and his first collaborator, Eiichirou Urano, stumbled upon an example of helping behaviour in breeding Rufous Vangas (Scheba rufa). In subsequent years, Yamagishi and a series of students and collaborators continued their studies of vangas, and of the Rufous Vanga in particular. The present volume contains a series of chapters, most of them authored by Yamagishi’s collaborators over the years, on their collective research on Malagasy birds, to mark the occasion of Yamagishi’s retirement from Kyoto University. This is not a Festschrift, in the sense of a collection of original contributions; rather, most of the chapters summarize the original, and previously published, research.

The chapters are well written, in a more informal style than would be tolerated in modern journals. I found this approach somewhat refreshing, as there are frequent asides that comment on the background of a line of questioning or on the practical or logistical complications that may arise during fieldwork. Major topics include the role of Rufous Vangas in mixed-species foraging flocks (T. Hino), the breeding biology of Rufous Vanga (including the role of helpers at the nest; K. Eguchi), male bias in the sex-ratio of Rufous Vanga (S. Asai) and the phylogeny of the Vangidae (Yamagishi and M. Honda). Additional chapters include a survey of Ampijoroa Forest, Yamagishi’s primary field site (T. Mizuta), a section that describes not only the vegetation, layout, climate and avifauna of the study area, but that also touches on the beliefs and customs of the resident Malagasy and on the travails of long-term field work; a natural history of the Rufous Vanga (Yamagishi and Asai); a brief survey of the breeding systems of seven other species of vanga (M. Nakamura); and a very brief review of co-operative breeding (Asai and Yamagishi). Each contribution concludes with a list of references cited, but there are no abstracts or ‘conclusions’.

I have some difficulty imagining the ‘target audience’ for this volume. Students of Malagasy birds may welcome having a survey of much of the research on Rufous Vangas collected in this single volume. I suppose that this would be an especially useful feature for one who is not yet familiar with the Malagasy avifauna. It is likely, however, that serious researchers will feel the need to consult the original publications, given the relatively ‘light’ treatment of most topics as presented in this volume.

Thomas S. Schulenberg

Also received


Following an introductory ‘Advice for observers of geese’, the authors then explain ‘why, how, where and when’ for those wishing to count these birds. The next chapter discusses young birds and families (population studies and census techniques), while the fourth deals with rings and other marking methods, reading rings and submitting records. Detailed information for identifying wild geese in the field, including rare species and hybrids, suggestions for further reading and useful contact addresses complete this useful guide for German goose enthusiasts.

M.G.W.

The Chulym is a meandering east-bank tributary of the River Ob’ and, along its lower and middle reaches in the Tomsk Region, where the study sites (1996–2002) for this book are situated, it flows through the southern taiga subzone. A valuable contribution to the ornithology of a little-known part of the West Siberian Plain, Birds of the Tomsk Prichulymie comprises three main chapters: ‘Study sites and methods’, ‘Distribution and abundance’, and ‘The bird population’. The authors recorded 193 out of 234 species known or likely to occur in the area.

M.G.W.


Produced by a large team in which Liu Yang and Lei Jinyu are the Chief Editors, this handsome publication is the first report for the whole of mainland China and it presents data on 857 species (about 65% of the total on the national list), including 32 listed in the Asian Red Data Book. The three main sources used to compile the Report are the database ‘Birdtalker Bird-Reports of China’, records submitted electronically or on paper by Chinese professionals and amateurs, and notes from foreign birdwatchers. Observations from ten provinces make up 80% of the total, Guangdong and Beijing being especially well covered. It is heartening to see the rapid growth in amateur birdwatching in China, at least in parts of the country, and this Report 2003 should do much to encourage it further, not forgetting the tips provided for observers on how to improve recording and the submission of records.

M.G.W.

FISKEN, F.A. & MILLER, J. (eds) International Zoo Yearbook Volume 39. 402 pages, figures and tables. London: The Zoological Society of London, 2005. Hardback, £71.00, €116.00, $145.00, p&p £8.00 within, €15.00 (or $20.00) outside, the EU, ISSN 0074-9664. Details also at www.zsl.org/info/publications, email: yearbook@zsl.org

The superb work of Peter Olney, appointed as Senior Editor of the Yearbook in 1974 and retiring as Consultant Editor in 2004, is appropriately acknowledged in this Volume 39. After a guest essay entitled ‘The future of zoos and aquariums: conservation and caring’, the first of the traditional three sections focuses on zoo animal nutrition, and ornithological papers there both result from work at Loro Parque Fundación, Tenerife: on lories and lorikeets (Loriinae), and Purple-bellied Parrot Trichla malachitacea. The two bird articles in Section 2 (‘The developing zoo world’) relate to Kori Bustard Ardeotis kori and Scarlet Macaw Ara macao. The Reference section (also available on CD-ROM, enclosed with the book) contains a list of zoos and aquariums of the world (up to 2004), a list of national and regional associations, and one of international studbooks (data from 2001 and 2002).

M.G.W.


Among several journals published by the Tethys Scientific Society (Institute of Zoology, Almaty, Kazakhstan) is the Kazakhstanskiy Ornitiologicheskii Byulleten’ [Ornithological Bulletin of Kazakhstan], numbers 1–3 of which (2002–04) are held in the Alexander Library, and now this Tethys Ornithological Research. Its two longest and most substantial papers describe, respectively, the birds of montane valleys in the Central and Northern Tien Shan (N.N. Berezovikov and others) and the ecology of the Common Coot Fulica atra in the Lake Alakol’ Depression (M.N. Bikkubalov). A general review of taxonomy, faunistics and migration in Kazakh ornithology at the start of the 21st century, single-species studies (Greater Flamingo Phoenicopterus ruber and Dalmatian Pelican Pelecanus crispus), migration of scrub and woodland birds, and two short communications are the other contributions.

M.G.W.


Papers in this publication on the birds of Kazakhstan were written mainly by research workers from the Laboratory of Ornithology in Almaty and are arranged in three sections. Two major review papers take up the first section, one on taxonomy, faunistics and migration in contemporary Kazakh ornithology, the second dealing with ecological and nature-conservation studies on the threshold of the 21st century. Section 2 (Faunistic studies) contains the first publication of an article on the birds of the Pavlodar Region in 1939 by I.A. Dolgushin, while other papers are concerned with the Betpak–Dala Desert, the Lake Alakol’ Depression (winter avifauna) and the Kokchetav Uplands (summer birds). Of six articles in the third section, three are single-species studies: Merlin Falco columbarius pallidus,
Saker 


Following the publication in 2000 of the two-volume *Important Bird Areas in Europe* (Heath & Evans, BirdLife International), individual countries were encouraged to produce updated inventories and this attractively illustrated and well-produced book for the Czech Republic is one such. Like 'IBAs in Europe', and comparison with Volume 1 (pp. 123–135) of that work is certainly recommended, it describes in detail 16 wetland, mountain and forest IBAs; it also provides all the background information necessary for easy interpretation of the data. Of the 35 species of global conservation concern used as a criterion for selecting European IBAs, 17 (out of a country list of 395) occur in the Czech Republic. However, the condition of 'regularly holding significant numbers' is met for only two: White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* and Corn Crake *Crex crex*.


More than just a field guide, this book consists of lengthy introductory chapters on the natural history of raptors, how to find and watch these predators, and their relationship with humans. This is followed by species accounts for all the diurnal raptors found in California (27 species, 18 of regular occurrence), including general information on each plus specific maps and information pertinent to California. Painted colour plates are provided for each species, showing the difference between adult and juvenile plumage and different colour-morphs, when applicable. This is an ideal book for raptor morphs, when applicable. This is an ideal book for raptor enthusiasts and birders in general who want a more in-depth look into the world of raptors.


An international conference held in Odessa, Ukraine, in April 2005 was dedicated to the 140th anniversary of the I.I. Mechnikov Odessa National University, its Department of Zoology and Zoological Museum, and to the 120th anniversary of the birth of Professor I.I. Puzanov, Distinguished Scientist of the Ukrainian S.S.R. Papers in these Conference Proceedings cover both theoretical analyses and the results of a wide range of practical studies such as faunistics, morphology, taxonomy, zoogeography, medicinal zoology, ecology, the conservation of biodiversity, nature reserves, museum work and the history of science. About 20% of 190 papers are ornithological.


The first of these reports was published in 1995 (see *Ibis* 140: 199) and the passing of a milestone with the appearance of this tenth, jubilee issue, 10 years on, is a tribute to the hard work of the Editor, his assistants and to all those who have contributed articles and notes over the years. Vadim Ryabitsev's editorial includes a fascinating breakdown of the contributors – who, why, where and when. Among the papers in Report No.10 is a detailed review of the avifauna of the northeastern Kemerovo Region. There are many short notes too, including further confirmation of breeding by Long-tailed Rosefinch *Uragus sibiricus* just within the eastern boundary of the Western Palearctic.