

justified. The Perth Zoo colony is the only remaining Great Egret colony in the Perth metropolitan region and is threatened by both development on the zoo grounds and by loss and degradation of the egret's foraging habitat. An accurate count was therefore necessary to establish a baseline against which long-term numbers could be measured. Previous counts (Jaensch and Vervest 1989) had been done from the ground, but their accuracy could not be judged. The cherry picker counts, although causing several deaths, have allowed the accuracy of ground counts carried out in the same season to be estimated. Long-term monitoring of this colony can therefore be continued from the ground. Based on our experience, a cherry picker should only be used in heronries when other census methods are not possible or where standardization of procedures is significantly important (as at the Perth Zoo) to justify possible losses of chicks.

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BOOK REVIEW

The Best of Australian Birds.

Dave Watts, 1999. New Holland Publishers, Australia. RRP \$29.95.

This publication comprises a collection of over 170 species of Australian birds as photographed by Dave Watts. It is essentially a 'coffee-table' style book, showcasing his exceptional photographic talents accompanied by a limited amount of text throughout. The images themselves are divided into sections which are habitat-based, encompassing Wetlands, Coasts and Islands, Forests, Woodlands and Plains, and finally the Arid Centre.

Whilst the text is principally superficial, skimming briefly from one group of birds to another leaving snippets of information along the way, there are however a few gems of Dave Watts' personal observations recounted that make the text worthwhile and provide a small insight into what it takes to be a true wildlife photographer (as opposed to a frequenter of wildlife parks and zoos). In one such instance he recalls staking out a waterhole among the gibber plains, well before sunrise. As a male Emu and its six chicks approached for a drink, a Wedge-tailed Eagle swooped in low, scattering the chicks but was unsuccessful in its attack. Now if only there were photos! Perhaps more of these anecdotes and less of the 'skimming' would have complimented the images to greater effect.

The photos that *are* published speak for themselves, as I suspect is the very intention of the book. The irony here is that the very people who will truly appreciate just how superb some of the shots are, will also be craving a lot more information as to how they were achieved. David Holland's books on Australian Raptors, Owls, and most recently Kingfishers where he combines his wonderful photographs with personal

essays so successfully comes to mind as an example of just how this book could have been developed. Never the less, Dave Watts' bird photographs combine a technical and artistic excellence and it is a great pleasure to see so many reproduced, and with such obvious care in the printing. Whilst pin-sharp focus may be an important ingredient in a 'successful' shot, the creative elements of composition, use of light, and capturing that intangible 'jizz' of each bird are what must be combined to produce truly memorable images.

My personal favourites here are the evocative, atmospheric group studies of Banded Stilts and a mixed flock of Grey-tailed Tattlers and Bar-tailed Godwits, both of them captured as if in perpetual motion, as indeed they so often are! The other portraits that seem to leap from the page are where Watts has cleverly used natural backlighting, typically early morning or late afternoon, to highlight the subject against the background. In this style we have magnificent studies of a Princess Parrot, a Wedge-tailed Eagle, a Nankeen Night Heron, and some Emu chicks. Disappointingly, there is only one image (superb though it is) of the rare Orange-bellied Parrot for which Dave Watts is perhaps best known. This is contrary to the jacket introduction informing us that several personal favourites of this species had been included.

Finally, I find the title 'The Best of Australian Birds' somewhat trite and unfortunate. Work of this quality deserves a far more specific, individual title than the commercially generic 'The Best of...'. Whilst this style of publication will no doubt appeal to a wide audience, I feel due recognition of Dave Watts' efforts and achievements is somewhat diluted here.

Steve Tredinnick
2 Scenic Crescent, Mt Riverview, New South Wales 2774

NOT THIS LITTLE BLACK DUCK

During 1991 I individually banded 14 Pacific Black Ducks in the Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney with two more being banded in 1995, a total of 16 birds. I would have thought that 'garden' ducks would have tended to stay at home but to date there have been four dead recoveries recorded from the banded population (25%). Each has been a different story:

1. The first recovery (Band No. 110-89835) was recovered dead at the Seal Enclosure, Taronga Zoo, Sydney on 2 July 1991 (taken by wild mammal species?), 2 km NE.
2. The second recovery (Band No. 110-89854) was from Violet Town, Victoria on 1 Sept. 1994, with the bird being recovered dead on the highway/road (probably hit by motor vehicle), 583 km SW.
3. The third (Band No. 110-89842) was recovered dead on Mrs Macquaries Road, Sydney on 24 Sept. 1998, hit by motor vehicle, 1 km E.
4. The fourth recovery (Band No. 110-89853) was *band only recovered* at Australia Zoo, Beerwah, Queensland on 2 Oct. 1999, 799 km N.

There was a note from David Drynan, Project Officer, Australian Bird and Bat Banding Scheme added to the Report of Recovery to Bander. It stated that

"This band was found at the bottom of the Alligator Pond!! One of the resident alligators was transported from Taronga Zoo to Beerwah in 1997 — there is a possibility (v. small) that the band was transported inside the Alligator!!!"

This must be the only band recovery attributed to an Alligator in Australia, and it demonstrates that both roads and zoos are not safe places for Pacific Black Ducks that are used to the safety of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney.

ALAN J. LEISHMAN

7 Belford Street,
Ingleburn, New South Wales, 2565

BOOK REVIEW

Emperor The Magnificent Penguin.

Pauline Reilly, 1998 Kangaroo Press Pty Ltd.

An imprint of Simon and Schuster Australia, P.O. Box 507, East Roseville 2069. RRP \$9.95.

The book has 32 pages with 48 colour photographs. The text is in a font which is larger than usual for a natural history book, and is thus suitable for reading by upper primary and lower secondary students as well, of course, by anyone interested in the life history of penguins.

This lovely book would make an excellent addition to any bird lover's shelf, and also to any children's library!

The photographs are truly magnificent and convey the magnificence of the penguins and the entire landscape in which they live. Contributions to the photographs are made by well-known Antarctic Division scientists including G. Robertson and D. Murray, R. Kirkwood and K. Green and Dr Barbara Wienecke helped with the information for the text.

The story follows 'Emperor', an adult male Emperor Penguin *Aptenodytes forsteri*, through his life for a year, starting in March, right at the beginning of the breeding season. At each step, Pauline relates the behaviour of 'Emperor' to the stage of his breeding cycle and to the conditions in the Antarctic winter. The story is written in a, easy-to-read yet factually correct style. This style no doubt is intended to make the life history accessible to younger readers than might usually read the life history of such an animal.

Pauline succeeds in astounding the reader with the details of the penguin's life, especially the hardships of breeding and the outstanding endurance of this animal. One cannot but help wonder how any animal could withstand the rigours of an Antarctic winter, as does the breeding male, while huddling with an egg balanced on its feet, in a colony with other breeding males.

But beware — the photographs are so beautiful that like me, you may want to experience them for yourself!

Let us hope that through such well-written and presented stories as these, children may have an increased wonder and appreciation of this magnificent world. As Pauline says in the closing sentence, "... it is up to us to see that this magnificent penguin does not suffer through our greed, neglect and stupidity."

Annette Cam

P.O. Box 123, Lawson, New South Wales 2783

DELAYED REPORTING OF A BANDING RECOVERY

I can improve on the delay in reporting the recovery of a banded bird 19 years later (Lane, S. G., 1999, *Corella* 23(2): 32).

Moreau, *The Palaearctic African Bird Migration Systems*, and Elgood, *The Birds of Nigeria*, credit me with ringing several thousand Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* in central Nigeria during the early 1960s. One individual (8652),

ringed in Vom, Nigeria on 17 November 1965, was recovered in Lithuania in July–September 1966. The Russian ringing authorities did not advise R. E. Sharland (Co-ordinator of the Nigerian Ringing Scheme) of this recovery until early 1997 (*Malimbus* 19(2): 103) — Yes, over 30 years! Perhaps they have 'very old scientific workers' in Lithuania.

V. W. SMITH

1 Karrakatta Road, Goode Beach, via Albany,
Western Australia 6330