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REVIEW

Atlas of Victorian Birds. W. B. Emison, C. M. Beardsell, F. I. Norman and R. H. Loyn. Graphics and analyses by S. C. Bennett, 1987. Department of Conservation, Forest and Lands, and Royal Australasian Ornithologists' Union, Melbourne, Australia. 271 pp. \$25.00

Atlas of Victorian Birds is based on the records of the Royal Australasian Ornithologists' Union's Atlas of Australian Birds, collected during 1977-1981, to which are added nearly 65 000 more records compiled by the National Parks and Wildlife Division of Victoria, Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands (formerly Fisheries and Wildlife Services, Ministry of Conservation). This expands the duration of data collection from January 1973 to June 1986.

The distribution of species is depicted in maps of 10 minute grids, together with graphs and tables of reporting rates. An extensive introduction defines the scope, scale and taxonomy

of the work, together with explanations of the species' accounts. As well as a general map of Victoria, three figures outline rainfall, elevation and physiographic regions. There are detailed tables describing terrestrial and aquatic habitats, followed by comprehensive information on the 22 physiographic regions; metropolitan Melbourne to a radius of 30 km is included as an area highly modified by human population. A gazetteer is provided.

The 229 species are generally presented two per page, but this is occasionally increased with distribution maps excluded for rarely reported species, mostly pelagic seabirds. The publication achieves a high degree of clarity, but the benefits of this are somewhat reduced by the small scale of the maps. This results in patterns of distribution being clearly depicted, but leaving the final interpretation of [more exact] locality to the reader. An overlay of vegetation zones would have been a useful accessory.

The distribution maps and text raise some interesting questions, two of which are briefly noted here. There is strong evidence in the literature of a seasonal movement by Olive Whistlers *Pachycephala olivacea*, but this does not explain the isolated population in western Victoria. My personal records included two individuals of this species during two visits to the same place on a ti-tree-lined creek, about 38°34'S., 142°55'E., in May 1985 and October 1986. Formerly the Heytesbury Forest, now cleared for agriculture, would have been suitable habitat for the species. The extent of this area was described by Donald MacLean, who, writing of the view from the top of Mt Leura (38°14'S., 143°09'E.) in 'The Man from Curdie's River', said, "the waving tops of innumerable trees . . . this Heytesbury Forest Country stretches south from the mountain to the sea". Future investigation of the remaining creekside thickets may show Olive Whistlers are more widely distributed than shown in the Atlas.

Perusal of the text also suggests other areas of research. In Sydney, Grey Butcherbirds *Cracticus torquatus* are found in sclerophyll forest with a dense understorey, where this cryptic species exploits all the habitat for food, even behaving like a flycatcher to take insects on the wing. Bulky items are not impaled on a spike, but are secured for butchering [dismembering] in favoured wedges in broken or dead branches. Is the citation of spiking in the Atlas text a repetition of an old error, or are there variations in the behaviour of individuals of the same species?

The Atlas of Victorian Birds could be protected against hard wear by the addition of a self-adhesive vinyl to the soft cover. This work will serve as a useful reference, most particularly for the information on plants and physiography. The RAOU's Atlas of Australian Birds of course is a major source of material and the Victorian Atlas is thus best used as a companion to that publication.

Copies are obtainable from the Royal Australasian Ornithologists' Union, 21 Gladstone Street, Moonee Ponds 3039, or from the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands Information Centre, 240 Victoria Parade, East Melbourne 3002.

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