

Reviews

Rare and Endangered Biota of Florida, Volume Two Birds. Edited by Herbert W. Kale II. University Presses of Florida, Gainesville, 1978. 121pp, B & W figures and maps. Price \$US7.00.

The state of Florida has one of the highest incidents of threatened wildlife in the United States, due primarily to "improvement" and transformation of critical habitat for the evergrowing demands of expanding human habitation and activities. This threat to the plant and animal life has been recognised and a series of inventories on the present and possible future status of potentially endangered and endangered species has been produced. This is the second of four such volumes which have thus far appeared on the vertebrates of the state.

The 58 species and subspecies discussed have been placed in one of five categories — endangered, threatened, rare, of special concern and status undetermined. The species accounts have been prepared by a wide range of individuals from conservation societies, universities, museums, research stations and government departments such as National Parks Service and Fish and Wildlife Service. Each account presents information under the headings of Description, Range, Habitat, Life History and Ecology, Specialised or Unique Characteristics, Basis of Status Classification, Recommendations and Selected References.

The accumulation and publication of these data have taken three years. The result is one of the most exhaustive studies of its type for any region of North America and undoubtedly the world. The ranges are quite precise in particular breeding localities. In many cases the species is sufficiently well studied that population numbers and trends can be well documented and the recommendations for its survival detailed at some length. For others, however, there is the repeated statement that additional research must be carried out before the biology and breeding requirements are understood and intelligent management plans proposed. Species designated "of special concern" are not yet rare, but are included because of the vulnerability of their habitats and the recognition of the potential for them to rapidly become threatened by environmental changes.

There is a rapidly growing need for similar works on Australian wildlife. Clearing and alteration of coastal areas, wetlands and forests, particularly rainforests, are exerting increasing pressure on species with small population or specialised ecological requirements. Unfortunately our understanding of these species remains scanty; financial support for research remains at a distressingly low level.

This book is a model for any future projects of its kind. It is only hoped that such undertaking in Australia can be provided for and carried out before it is too late to implement resulting recommendations with any hope of success.

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Upland Birds of Northeastern New Guinea, by Bruce McP. Beehler, illustrated by William J. Adams. Handbook No. 4 Wau Ecology Institute, Box 77 Wau, Papua New Guinea. Pages ix + 1-156, 5 colour plates, 5 monochrome plates, 16 figures. 140 mm x 216 mm. Price: Kina 5.

This handy-sized paperbound book is the first field guide to have been published on the birds of Papua New Guinea, a fact which alone makes it a very welcome sight for prospective New Guinea birdwatchers. It discusses over 300 species which are to be found in the Morobe Province from 500 to 4000 metres. Subspecies are not discussed. The book also gives information on where it is possible to watch birds in this area, access being quite a problem in Papua New Guinea due to the limited road system. The book is well set out with line drawings of birds families and gives species lists for various altitudinal zones e.g. hill forest 500-1050 m subalpine 2500 m — treeline etc. Relative abundance in these lists is indicated by three separate type faces denoting "common", "uncommon" and "rare".

The bulk of the book is given over to species accounts averaging three or four to a page. These are headed by the scientific name, then the English name and the length of the bird in centimetres. The English names are by no means consistent, e.g. *Monarcha manadensis* Black and White Monarch Flycatcher and *M. chrysomela* Black and Yellow Monarch. Information for each species is set out under the headings "field marks", "similar species", "habitat", "altitudinal range", "abundance" and "voice". The "field marks" section briefly describes the bird and any distinguishing field mark is set in italics. Plumage differences between male and female are noted in most cases. Occasionally the comments are misleading e.g. the discussion on the differences between *Tyto alba* and *T. capensis* and the remarks on *Calidris ruficollis*. Three species of *Collocalia* are discussed, *C. esculenta*, *C. hirundinacea*, *C. vanikorensis*, but a fourth very distinctive species which occurs perhaps regularly in the district is not mentioned; in fact it was the first bird I saw when I stepped off the plane at Wau. It is presumably *Collocalia papuensis* (Somadikarta 1967, Proc. US Nat. Mus. Vol. 124, no. 3 629). Though apparently no specimens are known from the Wau area. This potential source of confusion ought at least to have been commented on.

Ninety species, forty of which are in colour, are clearly and well illustrated. However, I feel that the available colour might have been put to better use. I would have preferred to have seen some of the whistlers and honeyeaters in colour rather than the fantails and birds of paradise for example. Identification of fantails is more a question of pattern than colour and there are already a number of pictures of the birds of paradise widely available. A commendable effort has been made to depict together groups of birds containing several species such as the cuckoo-shrikes or greybirds, whistlers, fantails, kingfishers, etc. Male and female birds are often shown. Despite its failings this book is essential to any birdwatcher going to Papua New Guinea particularly in view of its moderate price.

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