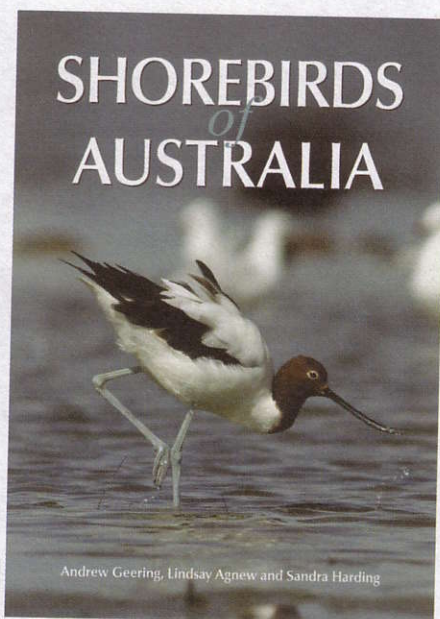


BOOK REVIEW



Shorebirds of Australia

Geering, A., Agnew, L. and Harding, S. 2007. CSIRO Publishing. 256pp, colour photos. ISBN 9780643092266. RRP \$49.95

You might ask, "What is so special about this book that other books and field guides on shorebirds (waders) have not already covered?" This book includes the most recent data and summarises information concerning evolutionary history and taxonomy (Chapter 1); breeding (Chapter 2); migration (Chapter 3); feeding ecology (Chapter 4); plumages and topography (Chapter 5); species description and vagrants (Chapter 6) and finally the threats to shorebirds and conservation actions (Chapter 7). Contributions to some of the chapters (particularly Chapter 2 and Chapter 3) are made by some notable wader biologists.

Chapter 6 is devoted to over 55 species of waders. Each account includes a basic biological description with several colour photographs and tips to aid in their identification and includes an up-to-date distribution map and also a population estimate. However, this book is more than just an identification guide as it deals not only with the biological aspects of the birds, but also the

imminent threats they face during their migration, such as large scale habitat destruction and pollution, particularly along the flyway. It also covers various conservation issues critical to the survival of these magnificent and fascinating birds.

The increased knowledge on the ecology, foraging, migration and habitat selection of waders over the past 10-15 years has been phenomenal and is a credit to those dedicated researchers. A diversity of papers have appeared, many of those published in *Stilt*, the *Bulletin of the Australian Wader Studies Group* and other scientific literature. This book incorporates this most up-to-date information about the Order Charadriiformes.

Overall the text is clear and concise and the photographs are generally excellent, but the text could have done with a little more editing as I did notice some small errors. For instance, on page one, last paragraph 'to provide a more accurate definition of what a shorebird is' there is a doubling of 'a more'; a different pagination font is also evident for Chapter 6. The most annoying feature I found however, was the fact that references within the text are given as 'Endnotes' and to find a particular reference one then has to go to the Bibliography. This extra step could have been avoided by simply incorporating all references in the Bibliography, which is very exhaustive and covers a wide range of topics pertinent to the book.

I also note that the voice descriptions are based on those of Hayman *et al.* (1995), which could have been improved as vocalisations of all Charadriiformes are available these days on tape or on CD, especially the Australian species. These are available on 'A Field Guide to Australian Birdsong' CD2 & 3, compiled by Howard Plowright and produced by the Bird Observers Club of Australia.

Apart from these little shortcomings, I found the book very attractive and its contents contain a wealth of information on such a fascinating group of birds. I can recommend this book to others interested in waders, whether they are birdwatchers, researchers or conservationists.

Hayman, P., Marchant, J. and Prater, T. (1995). 'Shorebirds: An Identification Guide to the Waders of the World'. (A & C Black (Publishers) Ltd: London, UK.)

Fred van Gessel
Woy Woy