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## BOOK REVIEW

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### Canberra birds: A Report on the First 18 Years of the Garden Bird Survey.

Philip A. Veerman. 127 pp. Soft cover. Available from the author at 24 Castley Circuit, Kambah ACT 2902. Pveerman@pcug.org.au. Also available from BOCA and Birds Australia. Price \$19.00 plus \$3.50 p&p.

On receiving a scientific book this reviewer starts at the references which indicate the homework the author has done. In this case they run to more than 3½ pages so he passes that test.

It is usual for scientific works to be read by a couple of one's peers prior to publication and to be edited. In this case, neither of these has been done, much to the detriment of the work. Efficient editing would have reduced the volume of the first two sections of the book and made them more readable.

The book is in three sections. The first is a general discussion of the data (49 pages). The second is a species listing and discussion which goes to page 90 while the individual species figures extend to page 106 with 8 species analysed per page. There are 6 appendices.

The annual histograms and the 18 year graphs are the real meat of the book and sharply illustrate the month by month status and the 18 year trend. It is shown that the development of gardens in Canberra has changed the behaviour of quite a few species. In some cases the observations are of small numbers which makes these of little consequence. In others with larger numbers the increases are obvious e.g. the Australian King Parrot, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, the Crimson Rosella, the Australian Magpie and the Australian Raven.

Those passerines which appear to be in decline in eastern Australia, probably because of land clearance, are represented by small numbers as they do not adapt to suburbia but the general trend is there. The fact that Canberra is virtually surrounded by the Nature Park appears also to be a contributing factor to the wealth of birds. It appears from these records that birds are more abundant where the site is near an area of natural vegetation.

Two hundred and eighteen species were listed on the Garden Bird Charts and 1 151 charts were submitted by 277 individuals. Only 8 sites were covered for the full 18 years but the data are very comprehensive because of the large number of contributors. 87 species were recorded as breeding.

The author has worked tirelessly for many years on the analysis of the data for the Annual Bird Reports published in Canberra Bird Notes.

Canberra is a relatively compact, small city and it is doubtful if a similar study could be made in any of the State capitals. This is an aspect which makes this analysis of the data of the Garden Bird Charts all the more valuable. The author acknowledges that the material he is working with belongs to the Canberra Ornithologists Group.

This volume is an important contribution to the literature of Australian ornithology. To get a comprehensive picture it demonstrates that many people must contribute data over a very long period.

Steve Wilson OAM