
BOOK REVIEW

Birds of Rottnest Island

Denis Saunders and Perry de Rebecira, 1993. (DAS and CP de R: Guildford, Western Australia.) Second (revised) edition. 210 × 150 mm. 118 pp., 6 Figs, 13 colour plates, b/w illustrations. \$A45.00

One only has to compare the covers of the two editions to realize that the authors have put a great deal of thought into improving their paperback book. The front cover features photographic insets of ospreys on nests, a species synonymous with Rottnest Island. The background colour of the cover is light blue, reminiscent of the colour of the Indian Ocean which surrounds the island. An aerial photograph of the island on the back cover is a familiar sight to people visiting Rottnest, and it rather cleverly depicts all major habitats that are described in the book.

I reviewed the first edition in 1985 (*Australian Birdwatcher* 11: 244-45). The layout of the second edition is similar to that of the first, but with some significant changes. There are four chapters: (1) Introduction, (2) Bird Habitats, (3) The Birds, and (4) Bird Watching On Rottnest Island. Chapter 3 is divided into six sections that present bird species accounts in six different habitats: (a) the coast, (b) salt-lakes, (c) swamps, (d) woodlands, (e) heath, and (f) settlements and disturbed areas. Chapter 4 recommends those areas of the island which are likely to be the most rewarding bird-watching spots. An up-dated bibliography (an additional eight references) will help readers find more information about birds on Rottnest Island. A list of bird species and their status forms an appendix.

The authors claim that they revised their book because there have been several changes in the status of some species on the island. However, they have also responded to some suggestions made by reviewers of the first edition.

Most species in the colour plates have been repainted. The figures are set against a coloured background (instead of white) which somehow makes the figures stand out more, and

also gives the book a more professional appearance. More plumage details are shown in some of the repainted species (e.g. Richard's Pipit), but for others (e.g. White-faced Heron) less detail is depicted compared with the first edition. This may be due to the quality of reproduction rather than that of the paintings. Migratory waders have been repainted in partial breeding plumage rather than in total eclipse (as in the first edition) — a more realistic way of portraying waders on Rottnest. The two black and white illustrations of the Australian Raven and Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike have been enlarged to show greater detail and to allow a more economic use of page space.

Species texts have remained largely unchanged. However, colloquial species names have been replaced by the RAOU's recommended English names.

The greatest revision has taken place in Chapter 2 (Bird Habitats). There is an improved selection of colour plates of habitats, and they are placed alongside the relevant text instead of being in the centre of the book. Maps of the island have also been moved from the back of the book to Chapter 2, making it easier for the reader to locate sites mentioned in the text. A computer-generated colour map of the vegetation zones is an attractive and informative addition to the book.

I criticized the first edition for having species accounts under specific habitat headings, maintaining that some species may be found in more than one habitat. The authors still use the same approach in the new edition, but have at least added an alphabetical index which should aid the inexperienced birdwatcher to better locate and identify species in the book.

It is refreshing to come across a revised publication which has heeded much of the advice of the reviewers. The first edition completely sold out. I am sure there will be no difficulty in selling the second edition to visitors to Rottnest Island and to the ornithological community at large.

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LITERATURE REVIEW

Compiled by D. Purchase and B. Baker.

This section is compiled from journals which are often not available to non-professional ornithologists in Australia. The following criteria are used to select papers for review:

- They relate to species which occur in Australia and its Territories;
- They provide details of techniques and equipment that may be of use in Australia;
- They provide details of studies that may be of general interest to Australian ornithologists.

Journals perused: *Ardea* 80(1, 2); *Auk* 109(1, 2, 3); *Biological Conservation* 55; *Birding in Southern Africa* 44(2); *Condor* 95;

Journal of Wildlife Management 58; *L'Oiseau RFO* 62(1, 2, 3); *Living Bird* 11(3); *N. Amer. Bird Bander* 17(1, 2); *Notornis* 38(3, 4), 39(1, 2, 3); *Orn. Anz.* 31(1, 2); *Ornis Beob.* 89(2); *Ornis Fennica* 68(4), 69(1); *Ostrich* 63(1, 3, 4); *Ringing and Migration* 13; *Safring News* 22(1); *Wildlife Research* 20; *Wilson. Bull.* 104(2, 3) 105.

GENERAL INTEREST

Ducks, hunters and rainfall at two sites in southern inland New South Wales. Briggs, S. V., Brickhill, J. G., Kingsford, R. T. and Hodgson, P. F. (1993). *Wildl. Res.* 20: 759-769. (Hunting does not appear to be adversely affecting numbers of major species of game ducks at two sites in NSW.)

The Regent Parrot. A report on the nest site survey in south-eastern Australia. Beardsell, C. (1985). *Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service. Report Series No. 1.*