

the aggregation of young figbirds, which then form mobile flocks to locate and exploit scattered food sources over a wider range than that utilized by breeding adults. Clearly further demographic studies of the species, involving colour-banding or radiotelemetry, are necessary to evaluate these hypotheses.

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## Postscript:

In 1996, 23 of 28 nests found in four separate suburbs of Darwin during the first two weeks of November had recently fledged young and the remainder nestlings. One pair feeding a fledgling began a second clutch in late November. Three nests in one shrubby tree were within a 2.5 m radius.

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## BOOK REVIEW

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### Australian Birds of Prey — The Biology and Ecology of Raptors.

Penny Olsen. University of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 1995. 256 pages including about 250 colour plates plus many drawings, tables and figures. RRP \$59.95.

This is it! This is the reference book on Australian raptors that has been missing from our bookshelves. Australian Birds of Prey must be the most readable, understandable and, most importantly, interesting presentation of facts yet published on any group of Australian birds.

This book is not intended as a field guide, or as a complete reference on Australian raptors. Rather, it presents a wonderfully illustrated overview of the life of diurnal raptors, with particular reference to the Australian species as examples.

The nine chapters each introduce several related topics. These are:

1. Introducing Raptors (major topics include discussion of the physical characteristics with a global perspective);
2. Australia's Raptors (descriptions and distribution maps, fossil records, relationships and nomenclature);
3. Raptor Ecology (distribution, habitats, populations);
4. Raptors as Predators (hunting, predator-prey relationships);
5. Raptor Reproduction (a detailed account of all aspects of raptor breeding biology);

6. The Healthy Raptor (the impact of pesticides, feather care, physiology);
7. Studying Raptors (surveying, trapping and handling);
8. Raptors and Humans (interaction with humans, rehabilitation);
9. Conservation and raptors (threats and solutions).

The book also includes a comprehensive bibliography for each chapter and a subject and species index. The text is amply illustrated and supported by many photographs, drawings, tables and figures. Indeed, the superb photographs illustrate most aspects of the biology and ecology of Australian raptors. A few very recognizable photos, particularly Lindsay Cupper's, have previously been published, but the vast majority are new.

I have noticed a couple of editorial errors on page 114 where the captions for Grey Falcons and Black Kites at nests have been transposed. Also the photo of the Letter-winged Kite on page 122 looks suspiciously like a Black-shouldered Kite. These aside and a few editorial and typesetting errors noted in the text, I could not criticize this wonderful book. It provides a most complete treatment of Australian raptors and is by far the best book of its kind. It really is an achievement in Australian ornithology.

Thank you Penny.

Jeff Hardy  
Ermington, New South Wales