

Censusing Robins in winter: A test using colour ringed birds. da Prato, S. R. D. and de Prato, E. S. (1984). *Ornis Scandinavica* 15: 248-252.

The estimates of the number of Robin's present made by a person who undertook transect counts were, on average, around half those located by another observer who intensively searched for colour-banded birds, but was subject to considerable variation (8-92%).

Band wear and band loss in Common Terns. J. J. Hatch (1983). *J. Field Ornithol.* 54: 1-16.

Factors associated with band wear and band loss in Common Terns *Sterna hirundo* were investigated by comparing weights of 402 worn bands. Bands on Common Terns wear primarily from the inside. Aluminium bands lose weight at the rate of 4.1 to 6.6%/year and the first bands are lost 4 to 5 years after banding. In-colour bands used on Common Terns lose weight at the rate of 0.5-0.6%/year and minimum life is expected to be about 40 years.

Band wear and band loss in Roseate Terns. I. C. T. Nisbet and J. J. Hatch (1983). *J. Field Ornithol.* 54: 90.

A short paper analyzing wear on aluminium bands which had been recovered from Roseate Terns. For 12 bands carried for 2-4 years the mean rate of weight loss was $6.27 \pm 0.39\%$ /year. For 14 bands carried for 6-11 years the mean rate of weight loss was $5.6 \pm 0.24\%$ /year. It is estimated that aluminium bands fall off Roseate Terns after losing between 53% and 73% of their weight. The oldest band in the sample had been carried for 11 years.

Band wear in Arctic Terns. J. J. Hatch and I. C. T. Nisbet (1983). *J. Field Ornithol.* 54, 91.

A general note reporting rates of wear of 28 aluminium bands carried by Arctic Terns. In this species band wear is very slow and loss would affect only the longest lived species. It is estimated that only 4% of adult birds would survive for 25 years — the approximate age at which they would become susceptible to band loss. The oldest band in the sample had been worn for 34 years.

REVIEWS

The Waterbirds of Australia. The National Photographic Index of Australian Wildlife. Angus and Robertson, North Ryde. 331 pp, 254 colour plates; 2 line drawings, index, bibliography. \$60.00.

This book is the second in a series of ten which will cover the entire avian fauna of Australia. The first in the series was *Wrens and Warblers of Australia* published in 1982. It is intended that the remaining eight volumes be published by the bicentenary of European settlement in 1988. The format of the series deliberately follows the style of John Gould's *The Birds of Australia*. Beautiful coloured photographs of all Australian birds are matched with a brief account of the bird's natural history. The series is presented in a form intended to appeal to the well read public. The photographs in each volume have been selected from the best contained in The National Photographic Index of Australian Wildlife.

The birds forming the subject of this volume have been termed "Waterbirds" but do not include all birds seen on or around water. Rather, those that frequent Australian estuaries, rivers or lakes are depicted. Sea-birds and wading birds are the subject of other volumes. Sixty-seven species from the following seven avian families are illustrated: grebes (Podicipedidae), herons, egrets, bitterns (Ardeidae), storks (Ciconiidae), ibises, spoonbills (Threskiornithidae), swans, geese, ducks (Anatidae), rails, crakes, gallinules and coots (Rallidae) and lastly, cranes (Gruidae).

Each family is introduced by one or two pages of prose, containing notes relating peculiarities of the family, preferred habitats, relationships to other families within or outside Australia, and issues of conservation. Further text accompanies each species discussed, including some historical aspects of the species' discovery or past distribution, notes on courtship rituals, feeding, nesting, habits, plumage and the like. Each species has collated onto a single page, data for morphometrics; plumage descriptions of the adult, immature and juvenile; specific identification including recorded variations; voice; habitat; food; noted habits; breeding; distribution and status. A map depicting distribution accompanies this data.

The text on each species is highlighted by several exquisite photographs. These show where possible, eggs, nest, chicks, adults (males, females, breeding and eclipse plumages), habitats and often birds courting, sunning or hiding. The reproduction of photographs of most species' eggs (vagrants and accidentals excluded) follows the treatise of each species.

The data for the text has been compiled by T. Lindsey from the research of many other naturalists. As such, there is no new data presented and many existing inaccuracies will have been perpetuated. However, the series does not pretend to present a treatise for the specialist in the field. It aims to interest the lay reader and achieves its aim admirably. J. D. Pringle has achieved a fine effect with his "elegant prose", making the text very enjoyable to the ornithologist and lay-man alike.

Eight accidental or introduced species have been included. These are the Grey Heron (historical record), Mute Swan, Yellow Bittern, Northern Shoveler, Garganey, Malay Banded Crake, Corncrake and the Mallard. The Grey Heron is a bird of Europe, Asia and Africa. It has been recorded in Australia in the interior of SA in 1839 by John Gould, upon whose reputation the record rests. Five unconfirmed sightings of this species in the Australasian region are all before 1910. Gould also sighted the Northern Shoveler in NSW in 1839; the occasional occurrence of the species in Australia was confirmed in 1975 and subsequently there have followed further sightings.

The Mute Swan and Mallard were introduced to Australia last century. The Mallard is well established in a semi-domesticated state in and around cities and towns; some small colonies of the Mute Swan have become established in WA and Tasmania. Photographs of these accidentals have been included in the text with the exception of the Malay Banded Crake. As some of the photographs for those species have been taken in Europe, it seems odd that one could not have been procured for this species also. As it stands this volume is left incomplete.

Common English names for Australian birds in any publication at present is a source of controversy for ornithologists and a confusion for everyone. It is stated in this book that the common names used are based on *An Index of Australian Bird Names* published by CSIRO Division of Wildlife Research in 1969. Other common names encountered for each species are included in the text. In reality, many of the names used are those from the "List of Recommended English Names" which supercedes the 1969 list and which are at variance with it. The latest popular publications on birds e.g. the RAOU's *Atlas of Australian Birds* (1984) and Simpson and Day's *The Birds of Australia* (1985) both use names exclusively from the "List of Recommended English Names". Earlier references used names from the 1969 index. Thus, this publication is not consistent with any of the recent popular works available on birds. Laymen are almost certainly going to be confused by encountering Australian Shelduck in some references and Mountain Duck in others.

These are minor problems which detract little from the quality of the book. It fulfills its aims remarkably well and is outstanding at a time when picture books on wildlife and birds in particular are abundant. Publications of this kind, which address and inspire the general public are vital at a time when the conservation of many species is in the hands of the general Australian public. It is a pity therefore, that its purchase price puts it beyond the reach of much of the audience for whom it was written.

A. E. Cam, Adelaide, S.A.

Wildlife Identikit. Peter King and Garry O'Neill; **Plant Identikit.** (Ed) Peter King. Published by The Conservation Commission of the Northern Territory. Each volume comprise 64 pp. and retails at \$3.00.

The Conservation Commission Northern Territory has recently produced a publication entitled *Wildlife Identikit — Common Animals of Central and Arid Australia*, written by Peter King and Garry O'Neill. This is a

companion to a booklet published two years ago *Plant Identikit — Common Plants of Central Australia*, edited by Peter King. Both are pocket sized publications containing 64 pages of high standard printing and reproduction of coloured photographs.

Wildlife Identikit will help you to identify 100 common animals to be seen in the Territory. Beside each illustration both the common and scientific names identify the species whilst notes on general information, breeding, food and identification provides adequate coverage of the birds, snakes and lizards, mammals, frogs, fish, insects and spiders depicted. The booklet includes a section on Tracks and Traces which I find a very interesting innovation. Each group of animals is colour coded for quick reference. Bush Hints and First Aid gives good advice to travellers. Unfortunately, as with many publications, small errors slip through unnoticed. In this instance the Mulga Parrot's general notes are accompanied by a photograph of Red-rumped Parrots. However, this criticism is in no way intended to belittle the quality of the booklet.

Plant Identikit covers 41 common plants of Central Australia. Each page is colour coded by utilizing the flower colour. Common and scientific names are given to each illustration. The flower, flowering season, leaf, seed pod and general appearance of the plant can be quickly seen. A blue code colour given to a group of three tables provides easy reference to identify "Plant Form", "Plant Community" and "Plant Environment". On the opposite page identification hints are listed with space for the reader to make his/her own field notes.

Both publications are recommended; each a compact booklet which give a quick means to identifying animals and plants, many of which are common not only in Central Australia but are found throughout many parts of the continent. The concept is ideal to encourage and an interest in natural history. They are available from all offices of the Conservation Commission throughout the Northern Territory and newsagents.

Beryl Marchant, Turrumurra, N.S.W.

New Members

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