

The authors several times in the text point out the limitations of their data as nearly all of it relates to the birds they themselves caught and handled in Victoria.

This is why the book fails to be a reliable aid to sexing and aging the birds described. In many cases the number of birds caught is too small to enable reliable conclusions to be drawn; in 21 species only 6 specimens or less were caught. The authors have also failed to fully examine the published literature. Although *Bird in the Hand*, editor S. G. Lane, 1974 is acknowledged in the references the authors do not appear to have made full use of it or indicated where any of their findings differ.

Sacred Kingfisher *Halcyon sancta*

Adult (1+) is described as having white tips to the secondary coverts. This means it is a first year bird still retaining the juvenile coverts as a full adult or bird which has completed its first post breeding moult does not have white tips to the coverts. Apparently all the adults caught were first year birds.

Grey Shrike-thrush *Colluricincla harmonica*

Here the aging is stated to be based on Disney 1974 and confirmed by the authors own observations. However, under Sexing they do not give the most obvious field character separating Adult males and females. Males have a dark ring round the eye of dark grey feathers and the females have a white ring.

Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx basalix*

Two birds caught the same day had different eye colours, pink brown and fawn grey and it is suggested this may be a sexing character (Perry de Rebeira) pers. comm.). This is correct and was published in the first edition of the Reader's Digest complete Book of Australian Birds (1976). The male has the red eye and the female the grey eye.

Eastern Spinebill *Acanthorhynchus tenuirostris*

The juvenile is not described although it has been well documented and illustrated.

These few examples show that unfortunately this book is a Band Aid rather than a Bander's Manual. It would have been improved by tighter editing. For example, the word ECLIPSE does not mean post breeding as it is used here, but the special eclipse plumage as found in some male Anatidae. Cloaca protuberance does not refer to the shape of the cloaca, but to the bulge behind the cloaca in some male birds which can be used to sex birds in the breeding season. It is formed by seminal vesicles in which the sperm are stored enlarging during the breeding season. In bright blue Superb Fairy-wrens this seems to be all the time.

This book is valuable as a guide to methods and techniques for taking measurements, examining moult and on understanding the statistics used. The data given under the species descriptions need treating with caution. The authors do not properly distinguish juveniles from immatures and often the description of the immature is that of the juvenile. This problem emphasises the lack of detailed descriptions for all plumages of Australian birds. Many people, including myself, have in the past considered these to be unnecessary if good illustrations were available, however, this book has shown that this is not so. It becomes more important than ever that the

projected RAOU Handbook gives adequate descriptions of all plumage type to fulfil this need.

This book can be obtained from the publisher A. Rogers, Lot 17, Ninks Road, St. Andrews, Victoria, Australia, 3761.

H.J.deS.D.

Obituary — Gavin Johnstone

Members will be saddened to hear of the recent death of Dr Gavin Johnstone. Gavin has been a member of the Editorial Advisory Panel of *Corella* since 1977.

Gavin took his Phd. at the University of Aberdeen and since coming to Australia his ornithological interests have largely centred around seabirds. His studies on the biology of Giant-Petrels on Macquarie Island are well known; less so are his contributions to many ornithological studies of the last decade and his stands on environmental issues.

He frequently led expeditions in Antarctica for the Antarctic Division and his successful visit to MacDonal Island near Heard Island was an ornithological highlight. His gentlemanly manner and ever willingness to help with enquiries will be much missed. To his wife, Kate and young family we extend our sympathy.

M.D.M.

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 DE LA MOTTE, K. A., Mosman, N.S.W.
 ELLIS, N. M., Braidwood, N.S.W.
 KERR, I. W., Beechwood, N.S.W.
 KNOWLER, N., Lyneham, A.C.T.
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