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BOOK REVIEW

Behavioural Ecology of the Galah *Eolophus roseicapillus* in the Wheatbelt of Western Australia. Ian Rowley. 1990. Surrey Beatty & Sons, Chipping Norton, Australia. 188 pp. rrp \$39.60.

The publication of this book is of considerable importance. Not only does it represent the long awaited results of one of this country's major long-term bird studies, but it is also the first of the modern scientific monographs on Australian birds. We have to go back to Frith's 'The Mallee Fowl' (1962) for something of its magnitude. Like that book, 'The Galah' stands to draw international interest to this subject. It should also be of great interest to both the legions of Psittaciphyles, as well as to behavioural ecologists. Because of its scope and orientation, this book should be able to proudly share the bookshelves with some of the recent important monographs such as Woolfenden and Fitzpatrick's 'The Florida Scrub Jay' and Koenig and Mummes 'The Acorn Woodpecker' (And it really whets the appetite for something synthesising those other great continuing studies such as Rowley's own fairy-wrens and the Heron Island silvereyes).

For such a familiar, common and widespread species, it is quite astonishing just how little was known of the galah before this study began. Again, it has been the modern attention to individuals and their specific activities that has revealed so much. This book reports on the behavioural ecology of the species in the grainlands of southern Western Australia. Although the initial motivation for the research stemmed from the pest status of the species, this has not limited the scope of the work to aspects associated with management. Indeed,

while much of the immense array of data and discussion is used to provide a sound basis for control and conservation issues, the body of the work is an extremely comprehensive picture of behaviour, breeding, ecology and life history. Nonetheless, the conservation 'moral' of this story runs throughout: in particular, the steady loss of nest hollows may be catastrophic for this and many other cockatoos throughout Australia's rural lands.

Although the small print and seemingly endless items listed in the Contents section caused initial alarm (there are 31 sub-headings in Chapter 4 alone), I need not have worried. This is not an unreadable academic thesis-style book of colourless writing. Ian Rowley seems to be almost single-handedly swimming against the rising tide of scientific jargonism and indigestible writing in biology. This is a reader-friendly book, full of real English and first-person familiarity. However, it is also not a 'I couldn't put it down' read. Inevitably, the sheer volume of aspects covered and the detail given to even minor behaviours makes for a comprehensive but somewhat tedious account. Such a minor point is however of little consequence when compared to the value of the information given.

One of the freedoms inherent in producing a book versus a paper is the virtually unrestricted space the author is given: at last, all of those bits of detail and supporting data can be included, and figures and tables proliferate. 'The Galah' contains 54 illustrations (including 18 black and white and 16 colour photos) and 33 tables. The quality of the 34 figures is excellent throughout. Needless to say some photographs by Graeme Chapman (who also undertook a large slab of the field work) are superb: the 468 galahs perched on the aerial is one of those photos you can almost hear. (I was a bit disappointed with the colour mix though; darker and duller than the originals I would bet). I did think that the amount of tabulated data was excessive and tended to not always be well supported by textual interpretation. There is a lot of information that could have been analysed by multivariate techniques and the result discussed in the text.

Nonetheless, these data will be of real use to aviculturists, biologists, and biostatisticians who have yearned for some real information to work on. I can see plenty of scope for using the book in teaching numerous ecological concepts such as the history, survivorship, and reproductive strategy. It will also be of real interest to people with a more general appreciation of one of the archetypal Aussie Creatures.

Overall, the quality of the publication is excellent, and the content has obviously benefited from careful scrutiny. The individualistic Rowley writing style will be too casual and 'chatty' to some, refreshingly accessible to others. The publishers do need to consider the value of careful 'production — phase' editing, a problem evident in their other important bird book of late (Ford's 'Ecology of Birds'). Only a few glitches caught my eye in 'The Galah' (e.g., no capital in Fig. 8; a lack of scale in Fig. 47, which is in Rowley (1983) Fig. 51?) but some editorial direction as to the suitability or acceptability of all tables and figures should be given.

This is an important book of an important bird. I recommend it warmly.

Darryl Jones
Nathan, QLD