

## Book Review



**Birds of the Cumberland Plain, Australian avian communities through time.** John Farrell and Alan Leishman 2022. Australian Bird Study Association. Soft-cover 188 pp., colour and black and white illustrations. ISBN 978-0-646-85818-0. RRP free from the ABSA at [treasurer@absa.asn.au](mailto:treasurer@absa.asn.au) \$20 postage and handling.

This book summarises 50 years of research into avian populations of the ecologically significant Cumberland Plain region immediately to the west of Sydney, New South Wales. It draws on historic banding and observational data to present species and population trends at 9 study locations. The book highlights the status of the increasingly fragmented bird populations in the region.

Since its establishment in 1953, the Australian Bird and Bat Banding Scheme (ABBBS) has facilitated and supported research into Australia's bird species. The ABBBS supports both short- and long-term banding projects, including those on the Cumberland Plain. Core banding data held by the

ABBBS includes species identity, banding location and banding date. Banders may also obtain additional information, such as morphometric measurements. Whilst banding records capture animal movements, age and morphological changes, in isolation these data do not tell a very complete story. The ABBBS offers centralised data management, but it does *not* perform data analysis. Therefore, banding data may remain with individual banders and sometimes not be subject to analysis. Without considered analysis, the data often remain essentially inaccessible. Publications such as this book are therefore important for disseminating scientific research to a broader audience.

The analysis presented in this book highlights key population trends and species' behaviour, including site fidelity. Sadly, the data often present a picture that species' populations are declining. Some once common species are no longer encountered at the study locations. There is also evidence in some areas that the abundance of aggressive native species, such as the Bell Miner *Manorina melanophrys*, is increasing.

One of the key factors in being able to provide this detailed data analysis has been the employment of consistent methodologies. The use of consistent net sites, recording of 'net effort' and the capture of standardised morphometric data have provided a comprehensive and comparable dataset.

Long-term research projects are uncommon, but are uniquely suited to identifying changes and temporal trends. The impact of climate change on Australian bird species is not fully understood. Additionally, its impact on populations, avian diversity and physiology are not yet known. Analysis of long-term datasets such as those analysed in this book may provide answers to the many questions that remain.

As articulated in this publication, research conducted in the Cumberland Plain region has assisted in the conservation of birds and their habitats. The ABBBS hopes that this book will inspire other banders and data collectors to analyse and publish their data, which can then be used to inform species' conservation and land management practices across Australia.

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