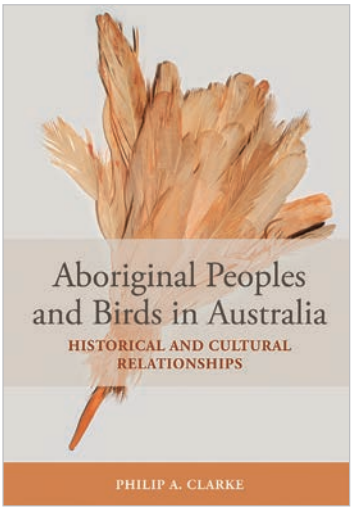
In conclusion, the book's profound textual and informational strengths largely outweigh its design weaknesses. The richness of the information presented is a testament to the authors' dedication and passion in bringing this important book to the market. While there are significant quibbles over the maps and photo layout, these are design issues that will no doubt be corrected in future editions and should not be the deciding factor when considering a purchase. *Wildlife of Victoria's South-West* is an excellent and detailed compilation. It is a splendid, single-volume resource that will undoubtedly enrich the experience of any naturalist, researcher or land manager exploring this large and diverse region.

Peter Rowland
13 River Road,
Sussex Inlet, NSW 2540

Book Review



Aboriginal Peoples and Birds in Australia: Historical and Cultural Relationships. Philip A. Clarke 2023. CSIRO Publishing, Melbourne. Paperback, 332 pp. Colour photographs. ISBN 9781486315970. RRP Au$59.99,

Aboriginal Peoples and Birds in Australia amasses a large volume of Indigenous knowledge. Nine chapters of varying length cover birds in a variety of roles: food, environmental, medicinal and cultural.

Philip Clarke is a former South Australian Museum anthropologist and now an independent consultant, whose published research is based extensively on collaboration with Ngarrindjeri language groups of the Lower Murray River and Lakes of South Australia. His subject will interest anyone who wants to learn what Aboriginal Australians know of our birds or gain insight into Aboriginal culture generally.

The author succeeds in his objective only in part. First, he exaggerates the differences between indigenous and non-indigenous ways of interpreting nature and makes his subject appear more esoteric than it need be. Second, there are many errors, and some are inexcusable.

Clarke writes that the book concerns 'a group of organisms that Europeans refer to as birds' and that its contents derive from 'obscure historical sources' 'hidden in often hard to find places', thus emphasising the extent of his research. His claim of 'obscure historical sources' is exaggerated. Many citations are from readily available texts and published sources are overlooked. Tidemann (2009), on birds and fire, cited around 20 papers not referred to by Clarke on the topic. Water is essential for survival, but there is nothing on birds and water (*cf*. Tidemann and Whiteside 2007).

He states that non-Western ethnobiological classification is not based on evolutionary relationships. Why would we expect it to be? Close cultural relationships with birds are found 'across the world', so the subject should not be obscure. Yet much of the book stresses that Indigenous Australians regard birds differently from Europeans. This proposition is simplistic and over-worked.

Clarke is inconsistent. After criticising Mountford's accounts of 'folklore', he cites Mountford as a credible source. He generalises: 'Scholars once believed…' with one reference. 'The Aboriginal panacea for all wounds was emu fat and ochre' (one reference); this is incorrect.

Clarke asserts that people-animal-people behaviours are often difficult to distinguish between, but this is only difficult from a western perspective, not Aboriginal, in which beings 'flip-flop' with ease.

Organisation of material within headings is poor and the text leaps around. In 'Birds as Ancestors', he introduces central Australian women's narrative about edible seeds. Frequent references to chapters forward and backward suggest lack of structured ideas. There are a number of irrelevant comments and far too much repetition. There are nine mentions of 'colonist James Dawson' and almost every author cited more than once is repeatedly and distractingly labelled 'anthropologist', 'archaeologist', 'doctor and anthropologist' and so on.

The author's lack of knowledge of systematic ornithology is understandable and his failure to obtain ornithological advice is therefore perplexing and a limitation to the book's value. He reasons that a 'black, white and brown-coloured "stilt" with a "turned up beak"' is a Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*, not a Red-necked Avocet *Recurvirostra novaehollandiae* and infers that the bird that stands on the lotus lily is the White-browed Crake *Amaurornis cinerea*, without arguing why it would not be the Comb-crested Jacana *Irediparra gallinacea* ('Lotus Bird' or 'Lily-trotter'). Later he writes of spearing the 'great' [= Brown] Skua *Stercorarius antarcticus* along the southern coast. Since skuas are rarely seen over land, this presumably refers to the Pacific Gull *Larus pacificus*, which he does not list.

Bird names are not standardised, mostly lack scientific names and are incomplete or inconsistent ('ringneck parrots' and 'ringnecked parrots'). Species identification is problematic; his equating 'eaglehawk' consistently with Wedge-tailed Eagle is questionable and he is frequently wrong.

Clarke fails to distinguish the naming of birds from their classification. It is a false premise to assume that an understanding of the relatedness of birds will be evident from the names given to them. Falcons, hobbies and merlins; mallard, teal, and scaup; harrier, kite, eagle and buzzard are groups of related birds with unrelated names.

Clarke explains that indigenous languages may not distinguish between the *Corvus* species that in Australian English are referred to as crows and ravens. This is hardly surprising because non-indigenous non-birder Australians are equally content with calling them all crows. Inadvisedly, he attempts to identify some included in the text, most as the Australian Raven *C. coronoides* but none as the Little Raven *C. mellori*, the common corvid of the Lower Murray and Lakes country of the Ngarrindjeri, his prime study area.

'In Aboriginal languages, the emu is not classed among other birds' (p. 88) (four citations) is contradicted later. He makes repeated references to the Emu not being included among group-names of birds but often categorised with other large game. There is no mystery in this.

Places mentioned in the text are not included in the index but the reference list has only minor errors and provides a valuable resource. Colour photographs are included near the middle but uncorrelated with the text. Some are stunning, many are not.

The book is interesting and is a worthwhile contribution as an introduction to Aboriginal knowledge but would have been improved with a more even coverage of the literature, had an ornithologist been consulted and the manuscript placed in the hands of a skilful editor.

REFERENCES

Tidemann, S. (2009). How Aboriginal stories of fire may have shaped contemporary burning practices. *International Journal of the Humanities* **6**: 17–31.

Tidemann, S. and Whiteside, T. (2007). Water and its importance: portrayals through Australian Indigenous stories. *International Journal of the Humanities* **5**: 141–150.

Andrew Black
South Australian Museum,
North Terrace, Adelaide, SA 5000

Sonia Tidemann
84 Eltham Avenue,
Port Lincoln, SA 5606

Corella 2025, 49: 109-112

RECOVERY ROUND-UP

This section is prepared with the co-operation of the Secretary, Australian Bird and Bat Banding Schemes, Australian Nature Conservation Agency. The recoveries are only a selection of the thousands received each year; they are not a complete list and should not be analysed in full or part without prior consent of the banders concerned. Longevity and distance records refer to the ABBBS unless otherwise stated. The distance is the shortest distance in kilometres along the direct line joining the place of banding and recovery; the compass direction refers to the same direct line. (There is no implication regarding the distance flown or the route followed by the bird). Where available ABBBS age codes have been included in the banding data.

Recovery or longevity items may be submitted directly to me whereupon their merits for inclusion will be considered.

Hon. Editor

The following abbreviations appear in this issue:

AAD – Australian Antarctic Division

AWSG – Australasian Wader Study Group

GBR – Great Barrier Reef

NSW NPWS –NSW NPWS Seabird Project

SOOCA – Southern Oceans Seabird Study Association

VWSG – Victorian Wader Study Group

Australian Brush-turkey *Alectura lathami*

132-25278. Adult (1+) female banded by G. Ross at Pearl Beach, NSW on 27 Jul. 2007. Recovered dead at Killcare, NSW on 30 Apr. 2023, over 15 years, 9 months after banding. 5 km NE.

(This is the oldest recorded for the species.)

Wompoo Fruit-Dove *Megaloprepia magnifica*

101-30090. Adult (2+) banded by J. T. Coleman at Finch Hatton, Qld on 24 May 2020. Recaptured, released alive with band at banding place three times, the last occasion on 1 Apr. 2025, over 4 years, 10 months after banding.

(This is the oldest recorded for the species.)

Little Penguin *Eudyptula minor*

190-82352. Adult (1+) male banded by PSG at Penguin Parade, Phillip Island, Vic. on 5 Nov. 1994. Recovered dead, (beachwashed) at Eagle Bay, WA in Oct. 2006, over 11 years, 10 months after banding. 2,747 km WNW.

(This is the longest movement recorded for the species.)

Yellow-nosed Albatross *Thalassarche chlororhynchos*

121-35759. Immature (1) banded by M. H. Waterman at at sea off the coast of SA (36º 30"S 136º 00"E) on15 Dec.1995. Band number read in field (bird not trapped) on Ile Amsterdam, Indian Ocean, France (37º 50"S 77º 34"E) on 22 Oct. 2024, over 28 years, 10 months after banding. 5,091 km WSW.

(This is the oldest recorded for the species.)

Shy Albatross *Thalassarche cauta*

280-01389. Nestling banded by N. P. Brothers on Albatross Island, Tas. on 30 Mar.1982. Recaptured, released alive with replacement band at banding place on 7 Aug. 2023, over 41 years, 4 months after banding.

(This is the oldest recorded for the species.)