

Reviews

Parrots of the World by Joseph M. Forshaw, illustrated by William T. Cooper. Lansdowne Press, Melbourne, 1973. 584 pp., 158 coloured plates, maps. \$65.00.

Only on rare occasions has a book been produced, with both author and artist resident in Australia, of such a high standard as *Parrots of the World*. Measuring about 395 mm by 275 mm with a mass of 5 kg, it is certainly a comprehensive and outstanding survey of the species and acceptable subspecies of the Order Psittaciformes. All species and some clearly-discernible geographical races are illustrated. Due tribute must be paid to Joe Forshaw for his enthusiasm and enterprise, aided by the award of a Churchill Fellowship enabling him to visit many of the World's museums and also to observe many parrots in their natural environment, and to Bill Cooper for his outstanding artistic ability. One regrets that the price might put this book out of reach of some who would otherwise be eager to possess it, although with present-day inflationary values its retail value is no doubt warranted.

From Peters' systematic arrangement in 1937 of one family only within the Order and six subfamilies, the acceptance here of three Families is of interest—Loriidae for the Lorikeets, Cacatuiidae for the Cockatoos and the remainder in Psittacidae. Loriidae (55 species) remains intact, Cacatuiidae (18 species) is divided into two subfamilies with the Cockatiel (*Nymphicus*) occupying one solely, and there are four similar subdivisions in Psittacidae—Nestorinae (the two kakas and Kea), Micropsittinae (6 Pygmy Parrots), Psittacinae (which includes all species in Africa and Asia, the Americas and many in Australia—261 in all) and Strigopinae for the peculiar and near-extinct Kakapo.

However the arrangement of species and subspecies is that which gives most interest and in this regard a fairly safe 'middle course' has been maintained, there being no excessive 'lumping' or unwarranted 'splitting'. In this regard, concerning those species found in Australia, whatever departure has been made from the 1926 *Checklist* has either been preceded by subsequent official amendments or suggested by other workers. These include the relegation of the Rainbow and Red-collared Lorikeets, both fig-parrots, White-tailed Black Cockatoo, Little Blue Bonnet, Hooded Parrot, Cloncurry Parrot and Twenty-eight Parrot to subspecific status. Probably closer study of some of these and a better understanding of their respective ranges could warrant their re-instatement as species. The eight rosellas are still retained, although *Platycercus adelaidae* is included 'merely for convenience, not as an indication of specific status'. There is no noticeable change in generic arrangement, except that *Eolophus* for the Galah and *Alisterus* for the King Parrot have been revived.

On a general basis a careful analysis of some selected cases indicates problematic decisions after reading (p. 18) that 'species is the category . . . regarded as a natural entity'. For example, the various species in such genera as *Eos* and *Loriculus* have been accepted consistently as species despite their similarity and allopatric distribution, yet many quite different forms remain united in the *Trichoglossus haematodus* complex (which includes the very different *weberi* from Flores), and *Loriculus tener* from the Bismarcks remains a race of *aurantiifrons*, although it looks as distinct as any and specific recognition was accorded it by Gilliard and Lecroy in their 'List of Birds from the Whiteman Mountains' (*Bull. Am. Mus. Nat. Hist.*, 135: 4, 1967).

The Foreword by Dean Amadon (pp. 9-10) and the Introduction (pp. 17-36) are both most informative and summarise splendidly the distinctiveness of the Psittaciformes among the World's avifauna. No doubt many would have preferred the arrangement to have followed the systematic whole instead of being divided into three sections according to geographic dispersion. An annoying diversion in the publishing set-up is that pages are numbered at the bottom inside, causing a complete opening-up of the book each time a page number direction is required, instead of the customary position at the top outside.

Nevertheless, *Parrots of the World* is a most informative publication, a welcome review of one of the largest and most popular of the world's bird families, equally of interest to both ornithologist and aviculturalist, and a decided ornament to any bird-enthusiast's library.

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Welcome Swallow Banding Project

During the next few years a group of banders in Tasmania will be banding as many Welcome Swallows *Hirundo neoxena* as possible. The aim is to find out something about their migratory habits. As the success of this project depends on recoveries from banded birds, banders are asked to please watch for banded Welcome Swallows and trap them if possible. The bands are visible with binoculars if the birds are sitting upright.

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