

REVIEWS

Waterfowl in Australia, by H. J. Frith. Angus & Robertson Ltd, Sydney, 1967. \$10.00

This attractively produced book, with its numerous colour-plates black-and-white photographs, distribution maps and detailed text, will be a standard work of reference for many years to come. In addition to our native species of ducks and geese Dr Frith also discusses the Mute Swan and the Mallard (both established introductions), and the Gargeny Teal and Northern Shoveller (vagrants).

The introductory chapters cover the family Anatidae generally, and such matters as habitats, conservation and field identification. A strong plea is made for the preservation of existing haunts and for the building up of additional breeding and refuge areas so essential in a group of birds subject to considerable human predation.

Wise management of wildfowl resources is necessary to offset the effects of shooting and settlement: in this regard the Officers of the CSIRO Wildlife Research (of which Division Dr Frith is chief) have undertaken extensive field investigations embodying the life histories of a number of species. Dr Frith, himself, has taken a leading part in this research programme. Much of the information thus obtained has been included in *Waterfowl in Australia*.

Full details, covering descriptions, distribution, calls, habits, habitats, nesting and field recognition are given of each species in a straightforward and readable style. Useful maps clearly show ranges, relative densities and breeding areas. Sonograms illustrate the voices of many species and will be helpful to the specialist in bird sounds. Status and relationships are also discussed, the whole providing interesting and informative reading for the specialist, the amateur and the sportsman. The weights and measurements given are based on an examination of numerous examples of each species.

Alternate common names are listed and in this sphere it may be mentioned that Dr Frith has changed the vernacular names of three species, i.e. Water Whistle-duck (for Whistling Tree-duck), Grass Whistle-duck (for the Plumed Tree-duck) and White Pigmy Goose (for the White-quilled Pigmy Goose), doubtless because he considers these names more appropriate and descriptive.

The excellent colour-plates by Betty Temple Watts depict the various species in life-like attitudes and accurate colours. Particularly useful is the plate of the downy ducklings and goslings of the nineteen species of Australian ducks and geese. The identification plates, showing the birds at rest and in flight, are by the Author and, in themselves, are a handy guide to field identification. Numerous first-class photographs by Edric Slater and Dr Frith depict habitats, groups of birds and individual species; and, in two cases underwater photographs (controlled) of the Musk Duck and the Water Whistle-duck.

Waterfowl in Australia is a valuable contribution to Australian ornithology and is an indispensable guide to all interested in the conservation and habits of the family Anatidae.

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Bird Report: 1965, compiled by Lord Medway and I. C. T. Nisbet. Reprinted from *The Malayan Nature Journal*, vol. 20, nos. 1 & 2, March, 1967, pp. 59-80.

This is the fourth annual report discussing the activities of the bird watchers and banders of the Malayan Nature Society.

Some 26,000 birds were ringed during 1965. The large increase in numbers over previous years was due to the regular trapping of Barn Swallows (*Hirundo rustica*), of which species more than 19,000 individuals were mist-netted, for the most part at roosts on power lines in towns. Some of these night gatherings of Barn Swallows (a winter migrant to Malaya) were found to exceed 100,000 birds.

The first overseas recovery of a bird ringed in Malaya is noted; it refers to a Black Bittern (a species also found in Australia) shot in India, about 1,600 miles N.N.E. of the banding point.

Observations on the migration of birds-of-prey, and the movements of waders and terns, are summarised. Other information includes details of a nest record card scheme, of a method of mist netting bee-eaters at heights exceeding 20 ft, and of a study of the effect of tree-felling on forest birds.

A table, which lists twenty species secured during the night at either lighthouses or at hilltop lights, indicates that, in Malaya, night migration is undertaken by such birds as crakes, pigeons, cuckoos, pittas, flycatchers, warblers, thrushes and glossy starlings.

Line drawings of the head-patterns, and detailed descriptions of four species of 'difficult' warblers (*Muscicapra*), are helpful guides to field workers.

A Systematic List discusses the occurrences, numbers and movements of more than 100 Malayan species.

An excellent photograph of a Yellow-breasted Sunbird is reproduced on plate 5 of the Report. This bird is the same species that occurs in Australia where it is generally listed as *Cyrtostomus frenatus*, though elsewhere placed under the name of *Nectarinia jugularis*. Australian taxonomists may care to resolve the problem, if such it is, in anticipation of a revised Check-list.

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Reprinting Volume No. 1

Reprinting of Volume No. 1 (7 parts) is expected to be completed by September.

The cheapest reasonable reproduction is being used and the cost will be \$3.

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