REVIEWS

Thirteenth Annual Report of the Australian Bird-banding Scheme, July 1966 to June 1967, by D. Purchase, Division of Wildlife Research, Technical Paper No. 18 CSIRO Melbourne, 1969.

Fourteenth Annual Report of the Australian Bird-banding Scheme, July 1967 to June 1968, by D. Purchase, Division of Wildlife Research Technical Paper No. 19 CSIRO Melbourne, 1969.

The publication of the 13th and 14th Annual Reports of the Australian Bird-banding Scheme completes reports for the Scheme to date, except for the current 1968-69 report.

Credit must be given to the Secretary, Mr D. Purchase and staff of the Scheme for overcoming the backlog of publication.

During the year ended 30 June 1967, 65,056 individuals of 376 species were banded with recoveries of 9,372 birds of 235 species. During the year ended 30 June 1968, 69,097 birds of 419 species were banded with 12,717 recoveries of 241 species. These bring the totals since the inception of the Scheme in 1953 to 777,139 birds of 657 species with a recovery rate of 9.1% (70,571 recoveries).

A change in policy was implemented during 1966-67 and two classes of permits were introduced. Briefly, bands are issued only to holders of Class "A" permits. These banders must be at least 18 years of age and are responsible for the submission of schedules. Other qualifications also apply. Holders of class "B" permits must be at least 16 years old and work under the supervision of an "A" permit holder. These distinctions have been made in an effort to raise the standards of banders entering the Scheme.

In addition in order to restrict random banding it is now necessary to submit projects for approval. The 174 topics approved include 10 official CSIRO, 92 single-species or species-groups, 59 area surveys and 13 miscellaneous projects. A full and detailed list is published in *The Australian Bird Bander* Volume 5, no. 1 and subsequent issues.

Both publications follow the layout of preceding reports, with a list of papers for the year included in the introductory text (19 in 1966-67, 40 in 1967-68) and full statistical tables of banding and recoveries during the year in Table 2 of Appendix 2.

Recoveries during 1966-67 include a Sooty Tern (*Sterna fuscata*) banded at Lord Howe Island and recovered in the Philippines and a Dominican Gull (*Larus dominicanus*) banded at Moon Island, New South Wales and recovered at Shoalwater Bay in Western Australia. The most notable distance recovery in 1967-68 was of a Marsh Tern (*Chlidonias hybrida*) banded in Victoria and recovered in New Guinea.

Longevity records include a Welcome Swallow (*Hirundo neoxena*) recovered 7 years 1 month 6 days after banding as a nestling, an Eastern Silvereye (*Zosterops lateralis*) 8 years 6 months 11 days after banding as an adult and a Fuscous Honeyeater (*Meliphaga fusca*) 8 years 10 months 14 days after banding as an immature.

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Australian Flycatchers, by Brigadier H. R. Officer, published by the Bird Observers' Club, Melbourne, 1969, pp. 108 plus Index. Price $5.00.

The publication of *Australian Honeyeaters*, by the same author, in 1964, was the first venture by the Bird Observers' Club into enlarged field guides with illustrations in colour. Those covering the hawks and the waders, compiled earlier with black and white text-figures, had proved most successful and several editions of each have since been issued. The BOC must be congratulated on such helpful books.

This latest publication on Australian flycatchers (Muscicapidae), which wisely includes also some smaller but somewhat-allied genera—*Pachycephala* (whistlers), *Colluricincla* (shrike-thrushes), *Falcunculus* (shrike-tits), *Oreoica* (crested bellbirds), *Sphenostoma* (wedge-bills) and *Psophodes* (whipbirds), is similar in general pattern and overall size to that on the honeyeaters. It contains more pages (even though fewer species [56] are included against 69 in the earlier publication), whilst the addition of specific distribution maps is welcome. No comment is made concerning some recent taxonomic changes and the 1926 Australian *Checklist*, with subsequent amendments, has been closely followed. However, the author is wrong when he states—"When it was decided that the scientific name of *Colluricincla harmonica* should embrace both the Grey Shrike-Thrush of eastern Australia and the Western Shrike-Thrush it is a little difficult to understand why the Brown Shrike-Thrush was not included at the same time . . .", for no *Checklist* supplement yet has made the three, or any two, conspecific.

Hugh Officer has travelled widely in Australia and has observed most (if not all) of the birds included in this book. It is decidedly advantageous for any author to be able to write from personal field notes—therefore one would welcome more information of specific differences and behaviour with little-known species, such as the White-browed and Buff-sided Robins, the Grey and Brown Whistlers and the Brown-breasted and Little Shrike-Thrushes. Nevertheless, there is little doubt that this book will appeal greatly to both the serious ornithologist as well as to those who just wish to watch birds. However the author emphasises that "this book has not been written for the student of birds who looks for meticulous detail, but especially for those lovers of birds who want an easily comprehensible description of birds, their habitats and behaviour".

The illustrations by Peter Slater are most pleasing. No doubt some critics will find with some that the colour is astray, or that the shape is wrong, but these are problems where every artist fails at times. However it is clear that Mr Slater is an able ornithological illustrator and his paintings certainly give added appeal and value to *Australian Flycatchers*. The map of Australia indicating localities mentioned in the text (inside front cover) and the individual distribution maps have been compiled by Alex Stirling, who is a competent cartographer.

A. R. McGILL, Arncliffe, N.S.W.

Australian Parrots by Joseph M. Forshaw. Lansdowne Press, Melbourne, 1969. xiv + 306 pp. Price $25.00.

Australian Parrots is the latest, most lavish and by far the most expensive of the modern Australian bird books. Despite, or perhaps because of, the ambitious and lavish approach it is unlikely to be rated the most satisfactory. Because of the price it is also unlikely to be the most popular or most successful —financially. The book however has some fine features. Many of the colour plates are outstanding and the information provided on individual species is generally comprehen-ive.

The problems with the book appear to arise from confusion of objectives or possibly from a conflict between the objectives or possibly from a conflict between the objectives of the publisher and the author. The publisher appears to have aimed at producing a lavish coffee table "popular". The author appears to have aimed at producing a technical monograph. The dust jacket notes in fact claim, "Joseph M. Forshaw's definitive study of Australian parrots is one of the most important scientific monographs of recent years". Whatever the background reasons, confusion or conflict, the result is not an entirely happy one.

With regard to the text, the information provided on each species is, in most cases, adequate. However, for some species the distribution information is open to question and the distribution maps could have been more informative. It seems strange to have accepted a mapping convention to show areas where a species is said to occur but where evidence of occurrence is lacking and then omit from maps in some cases distribution occurrences quoted in the text. An unfortunate printing error on one map shows an isolated population of the Gang Gang Parrot in the Ord River area.

Perhaps the greatest problem with the text is the dry monotonous style. The use of the scientific reference conventions—Sharland (1958), Condon (1962), etc. is most inappropriate in this type of publication and becomes positively annoying after a while. It also creates an impression of second hand information and greatly reduces the "authority" of the author. Another major weakness is the lack of any adequate introduction. Omitting the six pages of habitat illustrations and the notes on the "Plan of the Text" the *Introduction* consists only of two and a third pages and the zoo-geographical map.

In this *Introduction* no attempt is made to establish the Australian species, genera, families, etc. in relation to the World order Psittaciformes. Again the brief discussion on the zoo-geography and the Australian Psittaciformes and on habitat, is general and most inadequate and in places completely misleading.

In respect to the introduction and style generally, the author might well have followed more closely the example set by Dr H. J. Frith, in *Waterfowl in Australia*.

While in places Forshaw has drawn on the results of the Australian Bird-banding Scheme, banding appears to have provided only a minor amount of information on the Order Psittaciformes in Au tralia so far. The lack of detailed, authoritative information on movement and habits of many species that is evident from the text suggests that there is scope for many exciting banding projects within this Group.

The inclusion of the Norfolk Island Kaka and the New Zealand Red-fronted Parrot is unexplained and inexplicable.

In their apparent aim to produce a coffee table spectacular, the publishers have been somewhat less than successful. The book is unwieldy to handle and more notable for its waste of space than its artistic layout. For instance, the first five pages contain only the two words Australian Parrots. The next seven contain something less than 200 words arranged in rather untidy groups. The colour plates are individually excellent but the sameness of aviary and portrait box photographs becomes somewhat monotonous. The use of pasted loose leaf plates is a disadvantage— there is a continuing hazard of creasing and cracking the edge of the plates when using the book.

The only major error in printing and assembly appears to have been the transposition of the plates of the Rainbow and the Red-collared Lorikeets.

Because of the lack of photographs of the extinct and very rare species, these are illustrated with paintings by John C. Yrizarry. Five such illustrations are included. They are not particularly notable.

In conclusion it might be said that the book contains the makings of a first class popular pictorial bird book and a first class scientific paper. It is a pity that both have not been prepared. The attempted combination of the two is less than successful and at the price of $25 the result can hardly be recommended.

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Extracts from Letters

A letter from Mr F. C. Kinsky of the Dominion Museum, Wellington, New Zealand, has drawn attention to certain inaccuracies in last issue's "Bird in the Hand" on the plumage stages of the Dominican Gull (*Larus dominicanus*). The passage concerned is quoted as follows:

"Although the author refers to my paper, as far as bill measurements are concerned, he probably did not read the relevant parts dealing with plumage changes during the first 4 years. The statement under the heading 'Third year' is therefore most misleading. Second and third year plumages are very readily distinguishable by different wing patterns. Second year birds always have at least some mottled upper wing coverts, whereas upper wing coverts of third year birds are pure black. And secondly, one of the most obvious differences between the two age groups is, that second year birds independent of their general body colour never have white subterminal mirrors on their outer primaries (only in very rare exceptional cases) and neither have they any white tips to their outer primaries. However third year birds' primaries do not differ from those of adult birds. Also the third year identification by flecking on the head is only true during the first half of the third year.

"Another significant difference between second and third year plumages is the fact that second year birds have black or black and white mottled tails, whereas the tails of third year birds are always pure white."

I am very grateful to Mr Kinsky for this correction and clarification.—Hon. Editor.