

Book reviews



Dalmatian pelican *Pelecanus crispus*, one of two species of pelican which nest at Lake Mikri Prespa National Park in northern Greece.

on the role of national parks in Western Europe. The author is realistic rather than sentimental about conservation, very much in tune with the philosophy of the World Conservation Strategy. I have two small complaints. He ought to have said more about the vital part played by the staff of the national parks, especially the field staff of rangers and wardens. And there is a misunderstanding about the role of IUCN's Commission on National Parks and Protected Areas: it is *not* responsible for the *Red Data Books* of endangered species, as readers of *Oryx* will surely know.

Angus Waycott's book has a rival to contend with, Eric Duffey's *National Parks and Reserves of Western Europe* (published in 1982). But the similarity is confined to the title. Duffey's is a coffee table volume costing £15, Waycott's is a more practical paperback at £3. I would strongly recommend Waycott's *National Parks of Western Europe* to any conservation-minded tourist planning a holiday in Europe; perhaps the publishers might be persuaded to have it translated into other European languages so that it can serve a wider readership still.

Adrian Phillips,
Director, Countryside Commission

*Also available from Inkdon Publications, Solas House, Test Road, Eastern Docks, Southampton SO1 1GG. Add 60p and *Book reviews*

50p (for HB and PB respectively) to price given above for postage and packing.

Corals of the World

Elizabeth M. Wood

T.F.H. Publications, Inc., 1983

Available from T.F.H. (Great Britain)

Ltd, 11 Ormside Way, Holmethorpe

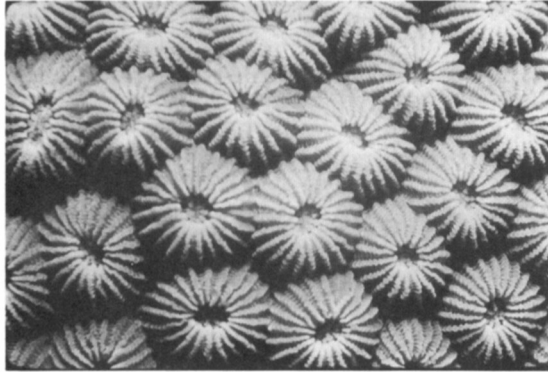
Industrial Estate, Redhill, Surrey

RH1 2PX. £19.95

With increasing enthusiasm for SCUBA diving, the growing need for survey work to identify conservation problems on reefs, and the rapid expansion of tourism in countries with coral reefs, this book will certainly be in great demand. Unlike previous books on corals, it is not intended for specialists, but for more general marine scientists and reef workers, for students of tropical marine biology and for naturalists, amateur divers and underwater photographers. The author herself experienced the frustration of trying to identify corals when surveying the proposed Semporna Marine Park for WWF Malaya and the idea of the book was born then.

Corals are notoriously difficult to identify, whether as living animals on a reef, or as bleached skeletons in museums and curio shops. Underwater, a coral reef presents a profusion of different colours and forms but unfortunately this

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The faviid coral *Diploastrea heliopora* (from *Corals of the World*).

diversity is not always directly related to taxonomic variation. Many corals alter their growth form according to environmental conditions producing, for example, fragile branching colonies in sheltered water and squat compact ones on exposed parts of the reef. Colour is also an unreliable guide as it depends on the type of symbiotic algae living within the coral tissues. The detailed patterning of the skeleton provides important characteristics, but this means that a specimen has to be brought to the surface, cleaned, dried and studied with a microscope.

For many people, the most valuable part of *Corals of the World* will be the colour photos of the living animals, most of which were taken underwater by the author. These permit a quick preliminary identification of corals seen on the reef, before the detailed keys and accounts are consulted. The complexity of the coral skeleton is explained with clear line drawings and a glossary helps to unravel some of the mysteries of 'coral jargon'. Atlantic and Pacific corals are treated separately, with a key for each group, and maps which indicate the world distribution of each genus. The descriptions include information on ecology, etymology of the Latin name (few corals have common names which often deters non-specialists), a black and white photo of the skeleton and a discussion of other corals with which confusion might arise. In most cases, identification is taken only to genus level but for those seeking further detail there is an extensive bibliography. The book includes a general account of reefs and comments on their present distribution around the world.

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Slightly larger than a field guide, the book is nevertheless compact enough to take on snorkelling or diving trips and will be invaluable to student expeditions and anyone carrying out reef survey work. Reefs throughout the world are coming under increasing threat from man's activities but remarkably few have been mapped, described or studied in any detail. Although many reserves and national parks border coral reefs and many reef areas have been proposed for protection, there are still remarkably few fully functioning coral reef reserves. *Corals of the World* will be a valuable contribution to efforts to safeguard the future of one of the worlds most valuable resources.

Susan Wells
IUCN Conservation Monitoring Centre,
Cambridge, UK

Hawaiian Birdlife, 2nd edition

Andrew J. Berger

University of Hawaii Press, 1981, \$29.95

The average birder is unlikely to read this book unless he or she is thinking of visiting Hawaii. As it happens, I *am* an average birder due to go to Hawaii in a few months' time, so I *have* read *Hawaiian Birdlife* . . . well, most of it. It is a big book, with an enormous amount of information in it, and yet it doesn't really tell me what I want to know. There is no easily checkable systematic list with clear statements of present status. There are no local maps, nor details of the best bird-watching sites. Notes on identification are inadequate; and the few pages of excellent photos are balanced up by many more pages of curiously dreadful illustrations. Nevertheless, Mr Berger would no doubt claim that most things are covered *somewhere* in here, and he would be right. The problem is he seems to be a scientist who is chucking in everything he knows without worrying much about readability or practicality. This is a tome abounding with accounts of esoteric experiments and references, in a style that veers from the naïve to the abstruse. One section begins 'Relative to gulls . . . terns are small slim graceful birds' . . . and ends with details of 'the high incidence of parasitism by nasal mites on five-month-old chicks.' I cannot help thinking that any birdwatcher who does not know what a tern

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