

families and species of New Guinea birds, with their known distribution and longer. The main part, nearly 600 pages, comprises a systematic account of all the subspecific variation (if any). It is a good feature that nesting and displays where known are given such thorough treatment; for instance, the summaries of the displays of each species of bird of paradise – New Guinea's chief glory, both in beauty and evolutionary interest – are a most valuable feature of the book.

The illustrations, by two artists, are rather mixed, both in style and conception. Five attractive coloured plates by Albert E. Gilbert show 27 species, and 48 pages of half-tone plates show 129 species, giving 156 species illustrated out of a total of about 650. The half-tone plates give the impression of being chosen rather haphazardly: those by Douglas E. Tibbitts are stilted compared with Gilbert's, though all appear adequate for identification. It may have been deliberate policy, but it seems a pity to illustrate well-known species of wide distribution such as the oystercatcher and little ringed plover, rather than typically Papuan species which cannot be found elsewhere.

Tom Gilliard's sudden death at the age of 53, soon after the manuscript was completed was a great loss to New Guinea ornithology, and especially to the study of the birds of paradise; he had been responsible for much of our knowledge of these superb birds and would surely have discovered more if he had lived.

D. W. SNOW

Birds of South Vietnam, by Philip Wildash. Charles E. Tuttle, \$7.50 US.

The author has long served in the British Foreign Office, including several years in Saigon. He is a laudably social-minded ornithologist, founder of both the Cyprus Ornithological Society and the Ornithological Society of Vietnam. This book is itself a form of social service, in that it is patently a first effort, largely based on other work no longer available, notably that of Jean Delacour – who writes a Foreword of proto-Gaullist egocentricity.

Compiled for his own use, the book is compressed and impersonal, but basically to the point. There is no word of the war, or its huge effects on bird and all other wild life, e.g. from American defoliation chemicals. It is a devoted effort to produce a practical, effective, slightly larger-than-pocket book, and the colour plates, a joint effort by author and wife, help in this effect. The outline drawings are dashing, but some colour values seem to have suffered in reproduction. More important, neither in the text nor on the plates is there ever any indication of bird size, a defect that is accentuated by strange scale effects on several plates, where large birds are shown smaller and vice versa. There is also an annoying tendency to devote illustration space to very well-known birds rather than especially Vietnamese ones. The selection of these illustrations implies some publisher influence, and this is emphasised on the book's front cover, which proclaims other countries 'covered' by the book, North Vietnam, China, Burma, etc. to Borneo. It is true there is considerable species overlap, but in the text there is no attempt to indicate – even by an asterisk – any distribution outside South Vietnam.

Let us hope the FO keeps the Wildashes in Saigon, and that rockets permit a revised second edition of a brave venture, ignoring the publisher's sales ploy for the goose-lover or Borneo boy.

TOM HARRISON

Birds in the Balance by Philip Brown. Deutsch, 25s.

Philip Brown was for many years an official of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and for the last eleven of those years their Secretary; now he is editor of the *Shooting Times*. Has he defected to the 'other side'? Sensibly he