

Book Reviews

Handbook of the Birds of the World. Volume 6. Mousebirds to Hornbills.

Del Hoyo, J. Elliot, A. and Sargatal, J. (2001) eds. Lynx Edicions. 589pp. Price £110. ISBN 84-87334-30X

This 6th volume was scheduled to mark about the half way point in the “HBW” series, but the increasing quantity of material available for each volume has presented the publishers with some problems (explained in an insert that accompanies this book). The dilemma faced is whether to include similar amounts of photographic and textual material in future volumes, which would mean more volumes in all, or to restrict the quantity of material, which would allow them to stick to the original schedule. To their credit, Lynx Edicions are asking readers for their views, and a decision is awaited, but the one favoured by the publishers appears to be to include all suitable material. As a consequence, this volume probably represents only a little over one third of the way through the series, and covers Mousebirds (Coliidae) to Hornbills (Bucerotidae), rather than to Woodpeckers (Picidae), which was the original plan: Jacamars (Galbulidae) to Woodpeckers will now constitute Volume 7. Volume 6 includes some of the most brilliantly coloured species, additionally covering Trogons (Trogonidae), Kingfishers (Alcedinidae), Todies (Todidae), Motmots (Momotidae), Bee-eaters (Meropidae), Rollers (Coraciidae), Ground-Rollers (Brachypteraciidae), Cuckoo-Rollers (Leptosomidae), Hoopoe (Upupidae) and Woodhoopoes (Phoeniculidae).

As in previous volumes, there is a lengthy (30 page) introductory section (this time on bioacoustics), followed by an introduction to this volume (with a detailed explanation of the reasoning behind the split described above). Family accounts cover a great deal of background, before plates and species accounts complete each family section.

Enough has been written of previous volumes to leave most people in little doubt that this series represents a major contribution to the literature. This volume maintains the same detail of text, supported by excellent referencing (c. 6,000 in this volume), high quality plates (44) and photographs (385), making it a highly desirable addition to the libraries of all but the most parochially-minded bird enthusiast. Although the price of each volume is high, it represents good value for money, and Lynx are to be congratulated on consistently offering great pre-publication deals. Furthermore, if you have yet to subscribe to the series, there is an excellent offer for purchase of the full set to date.

The Hand Guide to the Birds of New Zealand. Robertson, H. and Heather, B. (2001). Oxford University Press. 168pp. Price £19.50. ISBN 0-19-850831-X.

Whilst birdwatchers in Australia are becoming spoilt for choice for fieldguides, those in New Zealand have had a more limited selection. This brand new field

guide is therefore a welcome addition. After an introduction, a “where to watch birds in New Zealand” section is useful, giving likely species and contact details for conservation organisations, as well as for boat trip organisers and hotels etc. The standard bird parts diagram, glossary and reference list are followed by 74 plates illustrating all species known for New Zealand.

For a non-New Zealander, the imbalance between passerines and non-passerines in this avifauna is striking – not until plate 65 do passerines appear. These tell a depressing tale: of just 19 extant native passerines, only 11 are described as common or abundant. Sixteen passerine species are introductions, from Europe, Asia or Australia, of which 14 are common or abundant. The remaining passerines consist of six rare visitors from Australia and three extinct or probably extinct endemics.

The plates are generally good, accurately depicting all species in most plumage variations likely to be encountered. Distribution maps show only range, with no indication of seasonality or abundance, though both these are described in the text for each species.

This book will provide stiff competition to the other field guides available.

Avian Research at the Savannah River Site: A model for integrating basic research and long-term management. Dunning, J.B. Jr. and Kilgo, J. C. (2000) Eds. Studies in Avian Biology No. 21. Cooper Ornithological Society. 170pp. Price 20USD including shipping and handling. ISBN 1-891276-21-4.

Available from Cooper Ornithological Society, c/o Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology, 439 Calle San Pablo, Camarillo, CA 93012-8506, USA.

The Savannah River Site (SRS) is a 78,000-ha area comprising wetlands, forest and agriculture in South Carolina, USA, operated by the US Department of Energy, and is designated as a National Environmental Research Park. This publication, part of the Studies of Avian Biology series of the Cooper Ornithological Society, presents papers from a workshop at the SRS in 1996, the aim of which was to further the integration of ecological research with land management at the site. After the introduction, the 17 papers are grouped according to three themes: historical perspectives, existing long-term research and interactions with management, and conceptual approaches to merging management and research needs. Brief concluding remarks and a comprehensive listing of references complete the publication.

This book will be of interest to those with knowledge of the site, as well as those interested in the better integration of ecological research with management.

SEB BUCKTON