



REVIEWS

Birds of Britain and Europe, with North Africa and the Middle East.

By Hermann Heinzel, Richard Fitter & John Parslow.

HarperCollins, London, 1995. 384 pages; over 3,000 colour illustrations; over 500 maps. ISBN 0-00-219894-0. Paperback £9.99.

The first edition of this 'Collins pocket guide' appeared 23 years ago. It has undergone a number of mostly minor revisions since, but has now been, and I quote, 'completely re-designed, repainted, rewritten, revised and updated'.

Compared with the first edition, of which I still possess a (well-worn) copy, the plates are, indeed, largely redrawn, with the incorporation of more plumages and flying birds. Numerous additional small illustrations of, for example, heads, bills and more flying birds appear on the facing text page. One can spot a number of original paintings that have been lifted from the old edition, but the great majority are new. To highlight just a few changes, I was pleased to see that the amazingly long-necked swans and geese of the first edition now have better, if not perfect, proportions, though I do not care for the new 'scaly' effect of the grey-goose plumages. The two pages of flying ducks have disappeared, with more flying birds placed on the species plates, though there is now a useful double-page dealing with duck hybrids. The original double-page spread showing just 19 raptors in flight has been replaced by two spreads with over 100 illustrations. Another addition is that all the accidentals are now

illustrated. In general, the colours are good, certainly much better than in the first edition, though perhaps some of the reds and oranges are just a little overdone.

The maps have been completely revised and include more detail, even though reduced in size. There are now maps for all species except vagrants, though some are tiny. Was it really worth inserting 10 × 8 mm maps for both Bolle's *Columba bollii* and Laurel Pigeon *C. junoniae*, on which one is meant to discern that there are coloured dots off the African coast, when the text states that both occur in the Canary Islands?

The text, too, has been improved, and this new edition represents a significant advance over past ones. Everyone has his or her favourite field guide and, for many, Lars Jonsson's *Birds of Europe with North Africa and the Middle East* (1992), with its greater amount of detail in both paintings and text, will remain pre-eminent. It is, however, heavier on the pocket in both senses, being substantially larger and more than twice the price. I predict continuing popularity for this much-improved Collins field guide.

Malcolm Ogilvie

One Pair of Eyes.

By Donald Watson.

Arlequin Press, Chelmsford, 1994. 151 pages; 85 colour illustrations; 50 black-and-white illustrations. ISBN 0-9522019-5X. £55.00.

This book is another quality limited edition from Arlequin Press, this time featuring the paintings and drawings of Donald Watson. The 80 or so paintings span his career and most are previously unpublished. The text is also by Donald Watson, and is mainly about birds and his Galloway surroundings; the anecdotes, often prompted by the paintings, make a good read. Always a strong advocate

of working directly from life, his loose 'on-site' landscapes reveal a delightful spontaneity and freshness, with a vibrant use of colour. Happily, these qualities translate to the tighter studio works. In most, his birds are skilfully 'incidental' focal points.

Being a limited edition, this book is expensive. Nevertheless, it is warmly recommended.

Alan Harris

An Exaltation of Skylarks: in prose and poetry. Compiled by Stewart Beer. (SMH Books, Pulborough, 1995. 227 pages. ISBN 0-9512619-7-5. £12.95) From Theocritus (circa 310-250 BC) to the present day, via William Shakespeare, Gerard Manley Hopkins and Henry Williamson.

JTRS

Collins Checkbook: British Birds. Compiled by Michael Chinery. (HarperCollins, London, 1995. 128 pages. ISBN 0-00-220022-8. Paperback £4.99) A beginners' ticklist, with single photographs of 230 species.

JTRS

The Taxonomy and Species of Birds of Australia and its Territories. By Leslie Christidis and Walter E. Boles. (RAOU, Melbourne, 1994. 112 pages. ISBN 1-875122-06-0. Paperback \$18.00) The main interest for ornithologists outside Australasia will be the complete checklist of Australian birds (which it is planned to revise at least every three or four years). Species are listed with both scientific and English names, the latter generally following *Recommended English Names for Australian Birds* (RAOU 1978), but with changes to accord with international usage following *British Birds* (86: 1-2) for Palearctic species and Sibley & Monroe (1990) for other regions. The 23-page checklist is followed by 46 pages of discussion on taxonomic decisions taken and other changes, such as the removal of Red-vented Bulbul *Pycnonotus cafer* from the main list, since the introduced population is now extinct. With 19 pages of references, this is a very clearly set-out, authoritative and useful reference, essential for anyone seriously interested in the birds of Australasia.

JTRS

Bird Behaviour. By Louise Dawson & Mike Langman. (Hamlyn, London, 1995. 48 pages. ISBN 0-600-57981-6. £7.99) This guide, which is aimed at 8- to 14-year-olds, continues the same excellent standards as the previous three in the series. It deals with its subject in a very readable manner and is clearly written by people who understand the interests of young birdwatchers. This book should encourage its readers to enjoy watching birds and not simply to tick them, and for this reason alone it should be on every young birdwatcher's bookshelf.

David Parnaby

Birds in the Yorkshire Museum. By M. L. Denton. (The Yorkshire Museum, York, 1995. 224 pages. ISBN 0-905807-10-3. Paperback £7.50) This is a nicely produced catalogue of the bird collections of the Yorkshire Museum, which comprise 5,000 skins, mounts, skeletons and eggs. All data are included, where these exist, and there is a useful cross-referencing list of material by species.

Clemency Fisher

Follow That Bird!: around the world with a passionate bird-watcher. By Bill Oddie. (Robson Books, London, 1994. 172 pages. ISBN 0-86051-919-8. £12.95) The six chapters detail Bill's adventures (actually outnumbered by misadventures) when birding in Morocco, Scilly, India, Ireland, Shetland and Papua New Guinea. The catastrophes and crises are mostly the sort which are not funny at the time (ruined honeymoons, cars stuck in the mud, and unhelpful foreigners), but Bill Oddie's gift for writing turns every episode into an amusing and entertaining anecdote. Recommended light reading for every birdwatcher.

JTRS

The Barn Owl. By Mike Read & Jake Allsop. (Blandford Press, London, 1994. 128 pages; 80 colour photographs; 8 line-drawings. ISBN 0-7137-2349-1. £16.99) A delightful book on one of my (and many other people's) favourite birds. The text gives a good account of the life history of the Barn Owl *Tyto alba*, its habits and conservation problems, with added value from Jake Allsop's many personal observations and anecdotes. Mike Read's photographs cover every possible aspect, from habitat to pellets to birds in all plumages, and have been very well reproduced. Even if the text were not so good as it is, the book would be worth it for these illustrations alone. The dust-jacket photograph is nothing less than stunning.

MAO

A Photographic Guide to Birds of Britain and Europe. By Paul Sterry & Jim Flegg. (New Holland, London, 1995. 144 pages. ISBN 1-85368-413-9. Paperback £6.99) With three-colour thumbnail-size distribution maps, short texts and just single colour photographs (usually showing an adult male) of 252 species.

JTRS

Wildlife in the West Country. By Colin Varnell. (Nigel J. Clarke Publications, Lyme Regis, 1994. 93 pages. ISBN 0-907683-44-4.

£12.95) The photographs make the book, with some marvellous images: a Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* with a writhing Eel *Anguilla anguilla*, a Grass Snake *Natrix natrix* flicking its forked tongue, a Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes* at full tilt. I wish the short texts included even more information on where, when and how the photographs were taken.
JTRS

A Birder's Guide to Arkansas. By Mel White. (ABA, Colorado, 1995. 272 pages. ISBN 1-878788-09-4. Wire-O binding \$16.95) Well-planned, 'user-friendly' guide to 59 sites, with very clear maps and directions.
JTRS

ALSO RECEIVED

Where to Watch Birds in East Anglia. 3rd edn. By Peter and Margaret Clarke. (Christopher Helm, London, 1995. 266 pages. ISBN 0-7136-4064-2. Paperback £11.99)

Where to Watch Birds in Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire and Oxfordshire. 2nd edn. By Brian Clews, Andrew Heryet and Paul Trodd. (Christopher Helm, London, 1995. 315 pages. ISBN 0-7136-4002-2. Paperback £12.99)

Vogels van België. Oiseaux de Belgique 1901-1992. By P. Herroelen. (Herroelen, Boutersem, 1995. 60 pages. Paperback £7.00)

Parrots: look who's talking. Video. By Paul Reddish. (BBC Video, London, 1995. 48.53 minutes. £9.99)

Junior Nature Guide: Birds of Great Britain and Europe. By Angela Royston. (Dragon's World, London, 1995. 80 pages. ISBN 1-85028-240-4. £7.95)

Polygyny and Sexual Selection in Red-winged Blackbirds. By William A. Searcy & Ken Yasukawa. (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1995. ISBN 0-691-03686-1 (hbk), 0-691-03687-X (pbk). Hardback £45.00, paperback £24.00)

Every one of the 887 species of birds found in Britain and Europe is described and illustrated - including all rarities and introduced species. The book provides the information needed to identify every species - whatever its age or sex. Product Identifiers.Â Previously of the Bonn Museum Bird Room, Hermann Heinzel is now a full-time illustrator, designer and birdwatcher in the bird-rich area of southern France where he now lives. Richard Fitter has produced more than 30 books on all aspects of British, European and world natural history, but is perhaps best known for his pocket and field guides. He has been actively involved in conservation for many years and has spent a life-time devoted to observing wildlife. John Parslow was conservation director for the RSPB.