



## 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 The original double-page spread showing just 19 raptors in flight has been replaced by two spreads with over 100 illustrations.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)

Images of birds are generally very good, and if necessary pictures of colour morphs or distinct subspecies will be included. A comment on the maps; because this book was published in 1974, some maps may show that birds have larger ranges than in present day. A list of accidental birds is at the end of the book before the index, though just one of these many birds is illustrated. This book is very suitable for use in the field due to its small size, but purchasing a copy of this book in very good condition will probably be difficult, and some information may be outdated. Read more. 2 people fou Birds of the Middle East and North Africa. by Hollom, Philip Arthur Dominic, R.F. Porter, S. Christensen, and Ian. 1988, 280pp, ISBN: 0931130158. hardcover, 40 color plates of 350 species, 720+ species discussed, 510 range maps. (2484). Field Guide to the Birds of the Middle East. by Porter, Richard, S. Christensen, and P. Schiermacker-Hansen. 1996, 460pp, ISBN: 0856610763. (1278). Important Bird Areas in the Middle East. Birdlife Conservation Series No.2. by Evans, M.I.

The first major update for Europe, North Africa and the Middle East since the Birds of the Western Palearctic series came to an end two decades ago, this long-awaited checklist is essential reading for all those with an interest in the "WP" and its avifauna. Quantity. Add to cart. Dominic Mitchell is the founder and managing editor of *Birdwatch*, Britain's leading monthly magazine for keen birders, and managing editor of *BirdGuides.com*. He has written hundreds of articles and several books on birds, including the *Photographic Handbook of the Rare Birds of Britain and Europe*. Dominic has travelled in search of birds worldwide and visited all seven continents, but has a special interest in the birdlife of Europe, North Africa and the Middle East – the Western Palearctic. *The Birds of Britain A* by Hermann Heinzel. Other editions. Want to Read saving... Error rating book. Refresh and try again. Rate this book. Clear rating. I got this (in 1984) along with a copy of the Peterson/Mountfort *Birds of Britain & Europe*, which was in the old Peterson format (black-and-white with separate central collection of color plates) - a format so unhelpful that I never used that book. Uses the format of the Chandler Robbins (Western Pub.) *Birds of N. America*, i.e., color illustrations and color range maps with the species descriptions. I got this (in 1984) along with a copy of the Peterson/Mountfort *Birds of Britain & Europe*, which was in the old Peterson format (black-and-white with separate central collection of color p The geographic range of the birds described is large, containing Europe as well as much of North Africa, the Caucasus, and some of the Middle East. Though some of the information contained in this book may be outdated, it remains to be very interesting and detailed and is an excellent bird guide. Read more. Helpful. Am in the process of replacing my library of ID books that have gone missing during home moves over the years, Quality of this copy is well up to description and although certain information is now wrong as to distribution etc, it's great to be able to compare then and now. Read more. Report abuse. *The Birds of the Western Palearctic* (full title *Handbook of the Birds of Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa: The Birds of the Western Palearctic*; often referred to by the initials BWP) is a nine-volume ornithological handbook covering the birds of the western portion of the Palearctic zoogeographical region. They concluded that the mountainous western and northern areas of Iran, and the Arabian peninsula, except for two small enclaves in the south, should be included in the Western Palearctic.[3] Ullman (2000) disagreed with their conclusions regarding the Arabian enclaves, however, arguing that their depauperate avifauna, when compared to species-rich areas in northeast Africa, justified inclusion of the whole of Arabia.