

It is often easy when reviewing a production such as this, made up of a large collection of items, to find fault with a few of them. It is also easy to forget just how difficult (and time-consuming) it is to obtain high-quality recordings in the conditions that prevail where many of these birds exist. The comments above should not obscure the fact that both these volumes are of a high overall standard. When it is completed the whole series promises to provide a unique record and a resource that will have many applications.

Volumes 1, 2, 3 are available from McPherson Natural History Unit, PO Box 21083, Edgware, Christchurch, New Zealand. Price is NZ \$15.00 per cassette post-paid within New Zealand, overseas postage extra. Anyone who may be able to help with missing species is invited to write to the same address.

John Dowding



### **Philatelic twitching for armchair ornithologists**

The world's first international stamp exhibition with birds as its theme will be held during the 20th International Ornithological Congress in Christchurch, 6–9 December 1990.

Birds are the most popular theme for stamp collectors. Over 7500 stamps of nearly 2000 species were available in 1988.

In New Zealand the current definitive issue of bird stamps has raised interest in avian philately. Some 40 species are now illustrated on New Zealand stamps, and around 170 species listed in the New Zealand checklist have appeared on stamps of the world. It is timely that a catalogue of bird stamps of the world and a book about New Zealand birds on stamps are now available to collectors.

*Collect Birds on Stamps*, by J & H Eriksen. Stanley Gibbons, London 1983. 2nd edition 1988.

Softback, 400 pp, many b/w illustrations. Price £8.50 Sterling (\$49.50 in a New Plymouth stamp shop).

This is a thematic stamp catalogue which lists each bird stamp by country, giving its sterling value, English name, Stanley Gibbons catalogue number and price in pounds sterling. The birds are then indexed twice, by English and zoological names, and given a species number. Finally each species is listed in numerical order and stamps are tabulated by country and catalogue number, forming a 62 page checklist.

The catalogue covers the issues of wild birds listed in the *Stanley Gibbons Stamps of the World Simplified Catalogue* up to 1987. It includes overprints and surcharges but excludes variations of watermark, perforations etc. Birds forming part of a coat of arms, symbolic birds, poultry, peace doves and those too stylised to be identified are also not listed.

Illustrations are three-quarter size and limited to one per issue, and so many species are not shown. This is the checklist of bird stamps, but subspecies are not identified and no information is provided about the artists. Some difficulty may be experienced by collectors who limit themselves to the use of English names, e.g. Long-tailed Koel may not be recognised as a species on the New Zealand list. There is a brief bibliography.

This catalogue is invaluable to those collecting bird stamps of the world. It serves not only as a means to locate, identify and obtain the relative value of stamps but may also be used as a portable index to a collection.



*Another Way of Looking, New Zealand's Birds on Stamps*, by Margaret Forde, Published by David Bateman. 1990.

Hardback, 215pp, coloured cover & end pieces, over 350 b/w illustrations with text. Available from Birdpex 90, P.O. Box 4100, Christchurch.

Price \$49.50, post free within New Zealand.

This is a handbook to aid the planning and building up of a stamp collection featuring the birds of the New Zealand faunal area. It does not claim to be a complete catalogue or a definitive bird guide but aims to provide concise information about birds on the New Zealand checklist together with relevant information on some of the stamps of the world which feature these birds.

The book is divided into sections based on bird families and follows the order given in the OSNZ checklist. Each chapter begins with well-selected concise information on each species, ranging from a list of names, for the less common waders and seabirds, to nearly a page each on the Takahe and Black Robin. This is followed by descriptions of some of the relevant stamps accompanied by full-sized black and white illustrations in the margins. Margaret Forde highlights the changes and improvements in stamp design over the years and provides information on many of the artists.

Criticisms are few. The 1935 1d Kiwi was designed by both C.H. and R.J.G. Collins and the Satin Flycatcher is missing from the list of birds. Lack of titles for the illustrations and the occasional lack of an illustration for a detailed stamp description are easily overcome by reaching for one's stamp album.

Philatelic twitchers will welcome, for instance, the inclusion of the Goldfinch on the 1975 Christmas stamp and Takahe on the Invercargill Centenary stamp of 1971. Both are missing from the Stanley Gibbons catalogue as are almost a quarter of the birds shown on New Zealand stamps. It will be interesting to see whether Stanley Gibbons will include Lindy Fisher's apparently ill-fated Macaroni Penguins, which appear with her exuberant Orca on the 70c stamp of November 1988.

This book also solves the problem of the misnamed Cook Island Wrybill and explains why black Mute Swans occurred on some Australian stamps. Ornithologists may be dismayed by the sources of some bird stamps, e.g. the Moa from Cuba and the Wandering Albatross from Mongolia, but most will enjoy the hunt for varieties, including those of the four-legged stilt.

The volume is well indexed. Species are listed by common, Maori, and Latin name and stamps are entered by artist and country. The glossary and bibliography are detailed and cover both fields.

Margaret Forde is to be congratulated on producing an attractive book that is interesting and easy to read. Her informed comments on New Zealand birds and the stamps that depict them provide a very useful bridge between the two disciplines.

Myk Davis