

*Current Ornithology, Volume 9*, edited by Dennis M. Power 1992. Plenum Press, New York. xiv + 247pp. \$69.50 (hardback), ISBN: 0-306-43990-5.

*Current Ornithology* is a review journal covering all aspects of bird study. Volume 9 is 25% thinner than volume 8 and doesn't have the special New Zealand content of the 1991 book. In all other respects, however, it lives up to the excellent reputation of its predecessors. There are six review papers that cover a wide range of subjects. I doubt that I would normally have chosen to read more than one of the papers, but the luxury of being reviewer for the volume meant that I read through most of the book and skimmed the rest. All papers were clearly written and I found at least one personal take-home message in each.

Anyone working with breeding birds must at least wonder how their presence affects the nesting success of the species they are studying. Frank Götmark expresses tempered frustration with the published literature on the effects of nest disturbance and makes useful suggestions for future research. Those studying territorial passerines probably will not find much of an effect while colonial nesting species are especially susceptible to disturbance. However, the bottom line is that every study should make a separate assessment of the effect of disturbance.

Thomas Martin builds a graphical model for the analysis of parental effort in deterring predators and feeding chicks. The model and most of the examples are for altricial species but could be extended to precocial species. The paper does a good job of showing how feeding and predator deterrence can interact. I appreciated the separation of average predation rate from effective deterrence of predation by parents. Martin's point was that a high rate of predation is not sufficient reason to spend more time being vigilant for predators if the parents are not effective at deterring the predator. The general model is tested against three evolutionary 'paradoxes': the slow growth rates of tropical birds, the long nestling period of cavity-nesting birds and the small clutch size of primary (or excavator) cavity nesters.

The relationships between seabirds and their marine resources are very difficult to study and quantification poses a particular problem. Strip census methods are inevitably used to determine the distribution pattern of seabirds but this method is generally an imposed constraint and far from ideal. The problems of census design and some of the work arounds are well covered by Christopher Haney and Andrew Solow. The paper continues with a discussion of methods for determining the factors that cause observed distributions. There is even a do-it-yourself step-by-step bifurcating key to conducting a survey. Although written primarily for seabird studies, there is good general information for anyone undertaking census work, particularly where the object is to define the habitat correlates of abundance.

David Cairns reviews population regulation in seabird colonies. In the review Cairns outlines two competing models (stochastic versus density dependent), both of which may reflect mechanisms operating on colonies.

Two papers are of interest primarily to North Americans. David Spector reviews the song systems of wood-warblers (Parulinae) but includes a discussion of the evolutionary relationships between song form and function

that is of general interest. Enrique Bucher reopens the case of the North American Passenger Pigeon and the factors that led to its extinction.

Edward O. Minot



*The Birds of the Philippines*, by Edward C. Dickenson, Robert S. Kennedy and Kenneth C. Parkes. 1991. B.O.U. Check-list No. 12. British Ornithologists' Union, Tring. 507pp. £37.00 (hardback), ISBN:0-907446-12-4.

In the fine tradition of BOU Check-lists, this effort is large and comprehensive, a feat for a country of over 7000 islands and an avifauna of over 500 species. Some 420 pages are devoted to the Check-list itself while the rest comprises introductory chapters on the Philippines and its birds.

Despite the authors' attention to detail and reference to some 650 publications, there is a problem; not with the book, but with the relative lack of documented information on the archipelago. As they stress, there are still many discoveries to make about the biology and occurrence of birds there. The description, as late as 1990, of a species new to science is testimony to this.

It may be too late for some species! The indigenous habitats of the Philippines, particularly the rainforests in which live most of the native birds, are in a parlous state, as shown in the colour plate of forest cover. While conservation is not the direct purpose of the publication, it is good to see a practical plea for the birds and their habitats included.

The criticism may be unfair in this case, but I do find it irksome that history is so often deemed to start with the arrival of Europeans. The book's "History of Ornithological Exploration" ignores the fact that local people probably knew and still know rather a lot about birds.

The chapters on biogeography, although overlapping and poorly coordinated in parts, has some interesting speculations on the origins of Philippine birds.

The writing is generally easy to follow, though it is turgid in some parts and trite in others. There are a few errors of omission or editing. For example, to a reader unfamiliar with the Philippines, the lack of a single, well-labelled map of the country seriously undermines one's ability to understand the points being made. Figure 1 confounds by suggesting that the parrot genus *Prioniturus* starts with the letter *D*!

Despite these few shortcomings, the book is a monumental effort and will be an essential reference for those interested in the birds of this important part of the world.

Rod Hay