

The book is clearly organised, nicely produced and inexpensive. Any ornithologist seriously interested in the taxonomic status of Australasian birds will want to have a copy of this RAOU monograph.

LITERATURE CITED

- CONDON, H.T. 1975. Checklist of the Birds of Australia. Part 1. Non-passerines. RAOU, Melbourne.
- FLEMING, C.A. (convener) 1953. Checklist of New Zealand Birds. Reed, Wellington.
- KINSKY, F.C. (convener) 1970. Annotated Checklist of the Birds of New Zealand including the Birds of the Ross Dependency. Reed, Wellington.
- SCHODDE, R. 1975. Interim List of Australian Songbirds. Passerines. RAOU, Melbourne.
- SIBLEY, C.G.; MONROE, B.L. 1990. Distribution and Taxonomy of Birds of the World. Yale University Press, New Haven.
- TURBOTT, E.G. (convener) 1990. Checklist of the Birds of New Zealand and the Ross Dependency, Antarctica. Random Century, Auckland.

B.J. Gill



Handbook of the Birds of the World, vol. 2. New World Vultures to Guineafowl.
By J. del Hoyo, A. Elliott and J. Sargatal (Eds.) 1994. Lynx Edicions, Barcelona. ISBN 84-87334-15-6 (hardback), 638 p.

Having seen the scope and effort involved in the production of *Birds of the Western Palearctic*, and *Handbook of Australia, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds* (both covering tiny avifaunas compared with the *Handbook of the Birds of the World* (HBW)), when HBW1 was first announced I dismissed it as a work unlikely to succeed. After all, who would be mad enough to attempt a handbook to *all* the world's birds. After a detailed examination of HBW2, however, I am kicking myself and will certainly be collecting all twelve volumes of this monumental undertaking!

HBW2 is an extremely attractive and comprehensive book produced to an impressively high standard. It includes all hawks, eagles, caracaras, falcons, megapodes, cracids, grouse, quails, partridges and pheasants. In addition to an exhaustive text, HBW2 features 60 colour plates, 302 photographs, 590 distribution maps and over 7,000 references!

Firstly, a broad overview of each family is presented in informative prose covering systematics, morphology, habitat, habits, food, feeding, breeding, movements, relationships with man, status and conservation (e.g. Falcons and Caracaras runs to 32 pages; Pheasants and Partridges 46). It is reassuring to see conservation given such a high profile in a work of this kind. Then, each species is covered individually in concise detail, with a distribution map, and an illustration on a nearby plate. For species I am familiar with the maps were accurate, though of course small. The illustrations are attractive, helpful and shame many a modern field guide, though of course the range of positions and plumages is not comprehensive. To provide a bibliographic section for

each species is an excellent choice, allowing rapid access to new areas of interest. The 10 page index and 52 page reference sections to the whole volume are exhaustive and proved accurate wherever I checked them. At both the family and species level HBW2 provides a mass of up to date information invaluable for both interested amateurs, and professional ornithologists.

Given its enormous scope, and the consistently high quality, to focus on weaknesses seems unnecessary carping. HBW2 is well-organised and clearly presented, and has undoubtedly benefited from criticisms of HBW1. The awesome task of proofing this massive volume has been done with considerable accuracy. I found few typos, and the only annoyance was the consistent use, throughout the book, of the apostrophe e.g. "1960's" instead of "1960s". I detected some unnecessary duplication of material, but to find no points of criticism in a volume of this size would be extraordinary, and those I found were minor.

Overall I rate HBW2 extremely highly; it will become a standard and invaluable reference. Anyone with an interest in birds beyond the confines of the NZ archipelago should invest in it. The only caveat I have is, can the publishers produce subsequent volumes fast enough to counter the impatience of their readers!

I echo Frank Gill in his review of HBW1 for the *Condor*: "The Handbook should be everyone's first choice for a modern comprehensive reference on the birds of the world".

Mark Brazil