

## REVIEWS

**The technique of bird photography**, by John Warham. 4th edition. Focal Press.

What a wealth of information this book contains. It is large, nearly 300 pages, and covers almost every aspect one could think of for using both still and movie cameras. When I began to photograph birds seriously, I bought a copy of the first edition of this book and was impressed then with the information given. This latest edition, completely rewritten and reillustrated, must surely be the most comprehensive book available on this topic. It has about 30 colour plates, 60 b/w pictures and 70 very useful line drawings.

Besides a thorough coverage of the basics such as cameras, lenses, accessories, hide construction, nest photography, use of artificial light, details are also given of

Photography for the field ornithologist such as time-lapse techniques, bird census work, food analysis, and behaviour

Planning the shooting and editing of movies

Expedition photography; what to do in the tropics, in polar regions, deserts, swamps, and so on.

A chapter is devoted to the history of bird photography, and for those interested in entering their best bird pictures in photographic salons there is a section on birds as pictures. Perhaps in more than any other field of natural history photography, the cameraman concentrating on birds is most likely to disturb his subjects and their environment. A chapter on ethics covers this important aspect.

Naturally, this book is not aimed primarily at New Zealanders, as shown by the appendices covering British birds for which you need a permit for photography and a guide to photographing British birds at their nests. The data in these appendices applies to several New Zealand species also. A valuable reference list is given to books and papers quoted in the text.

The bulk of the book covers those aspects the average bird photographer needs most to know. Over 100 pages are about stalking birds, birds on the wing, filming birds in flight, use of baits and lures, remote control, nest finding, placing of hides, "gardening", working single-handed, stills and cine together, automated nest photography, pylon hides, combating wind, photographing birds underground, electronic flash at night/ in daylight/ in the rain, and so on and so on.

After 20 years of bird photography in New Zealand and in the tropics, I found myself nodding in agreement on almost every page and thinking "I wonder if the beginner will realise just how useful that information is?" This book is excellent, comprehensive and thorough in its coverage; the fruit of a lifetime in the field with a camera. I highly recommend it.

Don Hadden

**The birds and bird lore of Samoa**, by Corey and Shirley Muse. 156 pages, 70 col. ill., maps. Sponsored by National Audubon Society. Pioneer Press, Walla Walla, Washington 1982. (Copy in OSNZ library).

The authors have set out not just to provide a guide to all the birds of the Samoa archipelago but also to incorporate the bird lore; the stories, legends and proverbs of the Samoan people. I found that these stories, interspersed throughout the text, enhanced the book's value and made delightful reading. No doubt the life-lister dashing from one Pacific island to the next, ticking off the various endemics, would ignore these fascinating tales, but the visitor who wants an appreciation of how Samoan people view their birds will get useful background information from these legends.

The bulk of the text deals with the birds under the headings of Seabirds, Migratory Birds, Waterfowl, Marsh and Landbirds, and Accidental Occurrences, together with legends and proverbs. Appendices cover suggestions for successful birding in Samoa, the language, a checklist of the birds, footnote citations, and a bibliography. The section on birding deals well with the need for the inquisitive birder to respect local customs when away from the main tourist areas. Anyone who has lived in the Pacific would endorse the comments made.

Each bird is described, its breeding is commented on, and sometimes we're told where best to go to see it. The treatment seemed inconsistent at times. For example, the "Common Tropicbird" (*Phaethon aethurus*), a dubious record, is given a heading in the text and listed in the checklist but the sightings of Peter Child (*Notornis* 26) of the Little Tern and Siberian Tattler are omitted or mentioned only in passing. With few birds to deal with, the authors could have included every species given in the literature and simply commented on its status. Thus, the unconfirmed sighting of Cattle Egret in American Samoa, as well as Child's observations, would rate a mention, and the early records that now appear to be errors.

An intriguing entry for New Zealanders is the paragraph about an *Apteryx*: ". . . smaller than the New Zealand *Apteryx* but resembles it in other respects . . ." a quote from an 1897 book by Stair.

The authors' love of Samoa, its birds and its people is obvious throughout the book. It is not just a stark field guide. It is a very good field guide and so is warmly recommended. It will also appeal to those with an interest in the peoples of the Pacific and the special role of birds in their cultures.

Don Hadden

**SAOS Checklist of Southern African Birds**, edited by P. A. Clancey, Sigma Press, Pretoria, 1980.

In these somewhat out-of-joint times, bigots are apt to ask "Can any good thing come out of South Africa?" For ornithologists the answer is an emphatic "Yes". This hefty and forthright Checklist reflects both the breathtaking variety of birds over a vast subregion and the hard work and scholarship of the members of the SAOS Committee.

Name almost any family or tribe of African or Eurasian birds from eagles to sunbirds, from bustards to barbets and bulbuls, from ciconia to cisticola, and the chances are that, in the great land-mass covered by this checklist, it is represented by many species or subspecies, resident, migratory or both. Then there are the notable oddities, such as Ostrich, Bateleur, Secretary Bird, Promerops. A veritable gallery of bee-eaters, kingfishers, hoopoes, rollers, louries, starlings add brilliant colour, all logically catalogued, reduced to