

Central Europe shows how much we have still to learn about their ecology in New Zealand conditions.

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*Oiseaux de Nouvelle Calédonie et des Loyautés (New Caledonian birds)* by F. Hannecart & Y. Letocart. 1980. Les Editions Cardinalis. 150 pp.; map and 180 species described.

This, the first volume of an intended two-volume work, deals with what the authors call the more common birds of the area. Volume 2 will concentrate on the birds of the Loyalty Islands and the rarer species of the main island and surrounding seas.

It is not a great reference work but a picture book with a very brief text, given in both French and English. The birds' names, where possible, are in the local vernacular as well as in Latin, French and English. The book is divided into four sections by habitat: savannah, forest, swamps and ponds, seashore and sea.

The photographs, all in colour and all taken by the authors, are generally excellent. Many species, some of them photographed for the first time, have nest with eggs, young and adults illustrated. There are some very fine studies of petrels and terns and also more difficult subjects like small finches and honeyeaters, particularly the lovely Scarlet Honeyeater. The dramatic moment when a young cuckoo ejects its foster parents' chick from the nest is very emotively captured.

The text is disappointing in its brevity. I am sure that in their 8 years' field experience the authors gathered more knowledge about the resident birds of New Caledonia than is imparted in this book. Migratory waders do not appear to be the authors' strongpoint; the Wandering Tattler (*Tringa incana*) has been misidentified as the Grey-tailed Tattler (*T. brevipes*), although this error has been corrected by the addition of a small insert. In the text we are told that the Turnstone "... was found nesting on coral islands in our lagoon in 1978 and 1979." If this did indeed occur, then it is of some ornithological note!

The captioning of photographs could be improved. Some pictures are too briefly described and others are not described at all. Of the two photographs of the Turnstone, the first, captioned "nuptial plumage," shows an adult in non-breeding dress, and the second, not described, shows a first-winter subadult. There is also an annoying fault in the setting out; many full-page photographs placed along the page have their captions running across it.

The map, though adequate itself, lacks a scale.

All in all, though, I commend the authors on adding a fine pictorial record of the birds of New Caledonia to the literature and I look forward to volume 2. As New Caledonia is a neighbour of ours this book should excite some interest among New Zealand ornithologists and bird watchers, and I recommend it to them on the strength of its beautiful photographs.

The book may be ordered direct from M. Francis Hannecart, B.P. 229, Noumea, New Caledonia, at the New Zealand equivalent of \$US32 per copy, including mailing.

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