

## REVIEWS

*New Zealand's birds — a photographic guide*, by Geoff Moon with text by Ronald Lockley. Heinmann. 1982. 179 pp. 126 species illustrated with over 350 colour plates..

This is the fourth book of bird prints that Geoff Moon has produced since his *Focus on New Zealand birds* (1957). To say that he is our most prolific bird photographer is an understatement.

Photography of the standard achieved by Geoff Moon is a time-consuming business and requires incredible energy, patience and, for his hide work, often meticulous planning. It can also be a very frustrating business as no one can with certainty predict a bird's behaviour. One cannot fail to be impressed by the variety of species covered in this volume (with one exception) by a single photographer. An incredible amount of time and effort have gone to achieve this.

In his previous book, *The birds around us* (1979), the birds were grouped by habitat. In this book the birds of mainland New Zealand and its coastal waters are grouped by species. The emphasis is on our native (endemic and indigenous) birds with only 10 pages at the back of the book to illustrate some 22 introduced species.

In most cases some three or four prints illustrate each species. Nest and fledgling shots feature prominently, but there are also plenty of adult feeding, behaviour, species association, flocking and colony views. There is a good mix of superb bird portraiture and illustrated bird behaviour. I wonder how many ornithologists have witnessed dabchicks mating? This and many other rather unique action shots are included.

The text by Ronald Lockley is informative, interesting and easily read. It deals largely with behaviour and he quotes frequently from his own and Geoff Moon's experience. This is in no way meant to be an authoritative reference, but the "dry facts" of habitat, distribution, food, breeding and length are all listed alphabetically in a species guide at the back of the book.

The faults are few but worthy of recording. With some birds, notably the Tui and Pied Fantail, the colour reproduction in the review copy surely does not do justice to the original slides. The prints are so dark that not only is feather pattern lost but so also is a lot of significant gross detail. This is most unfortunate as the same Tui shots are shown on an illustrated order-form that came with the book, on which the printing is perfect, showing beautiful feather pattern and all the detail expected. The illustrations of Whiteheads, Tomtits, and Fernbirds are all similarly affected to varying degrees.

The best photographic studies in this book are superb, but there are some that are not and these contrast rather obviously. The Brown Creeper and the Sharp-tailed Sandpiper shots are not of the standard one has come to expect from Geoff Moon and, having seen them, one might find the birds hard to recognise in the field.

Finally, it would have been more interesting to the ornithologist

if some indication as to the location of appropriate photographs was added to the subtitles.

These are very minor faults and detract very little from the final product.

This book is an excellent photographic guide to our mainland birds and will provide a lot of pleasure and interest for the mere bird lover and ornithologist alike.

T. C. Dennison

*The contributions of Cook's Third Voyage to the ornithology of the Hawaiian Islands*, by David G. Medway. 1981. Pacific Science 35 (2): 105-173. Copy in OSNZ library.

This paper is an important contribution to the history of Hawaiian ornithology. Cook's brief visits in 1778 and 1779 provided the first European contact with the birds of the Hawaiian Islands. First descriptions of 11 species or subspecies were based on specimens collected, and 6-7 types still survive in British and European museums.

This is the first detailed account dealing specifically with ornithological observations made during the visits, including relevant journal accounts, the bird specimens obtained, and the descriptions later based on those specimens. The history and fate of the various specimens are traced and discussed in scholarly detail; original descriptions are reproduced in full, together with English translation if necessary, and there are eight black-and-white plates and one colour plate of first paintings.

B. D. Heather

*Finding birds around the world*, by P. Alden and J. Gooders. 1981. Andre Deutsch. 683 pp. NZ\$31.50.

This is clearly an American book written in American for the American tick collector. Just under half its pages are devoted to the American continent and about a third of the remaining localities discussed are large towns or capital cities: rarely centres from which an experienced birdwatcher would plan his excursions!

This sort of book is dangerous in that it is bound to increase the disturbance of bird habitats and, in easily accessible places, it can lead to their complete despoilment. Conversely, in countries such as our own, well away from centres of large populations of birdwatchers, making the whereabouts of good localities known is acceptable and may even do good in arousing public awareness. Roger Peterson, in the foreword to this book, illustrates where this has happened, even in the United States.

The book comprises simply an introduction, which is partly explanatory and partly advice to the novice traveller-cum-birdwatcher; 111 chapters, each discussing one area; and a bibliography and indexes. Chapter 111 deals with New Zealand and is the obvious place to start. Much as I endorse the complimentary sentiments expressed about our country, I cannot imagine anyone residing outside the Antarctic ice cap thinking that New Zealand provides "excellent birding," least of all those to whom this book would most appeal: one needs to work hard at that sport here. Apart from mentioning some of the more obvious