

non-avian vertebrates such as the roof rat (*Rattus rattus*), Polynesian rat (*R. exulans*) and feral cats. The fact that Niue is perhaps the only South Pacific island without introduced birds is not mentioned. The conservation legislation passed in the 1970s is mentioned but not that it has since been revoked. Finally, one wonders why, with so many specimens available, no simple statistics have been applied to support the authors' findings.

However, despite these shortcomings, *The bird fauna of Niue* is a masterly approach to the systematics of the island's birds, including as it does an almost complete bibliography and using ample study skins. The description of the plumages and moult of the Golden Plover are of great value and interest. We have to regret that one of the authors has left South Pacific shores and so will not be available to handle more of our problems.

Kazimierz Wodzicki

Birds of prey of the world, by Friedhelm Weick, 1980. Collins. pp. 159, 1144 paintings, 160 line drawings. NZ\$50.00.

This book is based on the author's practical experience as a bird painter over 25 years and has been produced with the help of the late Dr Leslie H. Brown, an acknowledged world authority on raptors. Essentially the book is intended as an identification guide to the world's raptors, inspired by Sir Peter Scott's 'Coloured Key to the Waterfowl of the World' and should not be seen as a competitor to other more comprehensive volumes. To this end the book is composed of brief sections, for example, on the topography of a diurnal bird of prey, which serve to introduce and explain the use of the identification key. To supplement this key each species in the Order Falconiformes is illustrated and briefly described according to its plumage and distribution, together with measurements essential to quick and easy identification in the field. An additional aid to rapid diagnosis is the use of small arrows on the colour plates which draw attention to significant differences in appearance and plumage, be they racial, colour phase or otherwise. The text is in English and German.

My response to this book, even as a raptor enthusiast, is lukewarm. Much of its bulk is taken up by the German language sections, which tend to confuse the reader, are of doubtful appeal to New Zealand ornithologists, and when left out, leave little that has not already been written elsewhere. Perhaps two editions, one in English and the other in German, would have been more suitable, and at half the price!

I am most familiar with New Zealand raptors and so have judged the book's accuracy on these species and, alas, the author is not up to date with his information. The author may perhaps be forgiven for not including research done since 1977, but much of the data left out, for example, on the Harrier's length, weight and culmen, has been available for many years. However, the author has been meticulous in the preparation of his colour plates, and, apart from the dorsal surface of the adult male Harrier's tail, which is much more heavily barred, the standard of accuracy is high. Despite this, my recommendation is not to buy the book. Review copy deposited in OSNZ library.

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