

discusses is the etymology of the scientific names of the fossil rails; it is a pity that Ripley did not follow him in this, especially as the introductory chapters show that he is not only well read, but writes well.

The book is well designed, well printed and well bound. Although expensive, it is worth buying by those who have \$75.00 to spare; not only for its information and the beauty of its illustrations but also for the rather materialistic reason of a good investment. New Zealand ornithologists should at least try to examine this book; I doubt if the more dedicated could then resist buying a copy if they can get one, which won't be easy.

— G. R. WILLIAMS

*Sounds of New Zealand birds, Vol. 8.* 1977. McPherson Natural History Unit, P.O. Box 21083, Edgeware, Christchurch.

A 45 rpm record of calls of 10 species of wader. All are on the New Zealand list but two (Bristle-thighed Curlew and Upland Plover) are barely so. A third, the Pacific Golden Plover, is represented by tape recordings from Manitoba (*sic*), presumably Manitoba Province and therefore of the American Golden Plover (*dominica*) and not the subspecies (*fulva*) that migrates to New Zealand, though some of its calls seem alike.

The quality is high, with only rare blemishes due to irrelevant background sounds and "blasting" from too high a recording level or too close a microphone, hardly the fault of Mr McPherson. The recordings are bound to intrigue the New Zealand wader-watcher, even if tapes made on boreal breeding grounds have mainly academic interest in the south.

The Eastern Bar-tailed Godwit, recorded at Heathcote Estuary: a lively chorus of flocked birds, presumably at a high tide roost — a nostalgic sound but it does go on and on! Asiatic Black-tailed Godwit: a selection of fascinating, well-recorded calls made on nesting territory, not stated where (French Institut Echo collection). Hudsonian Godwit: calls of male at nest, Fort Churchill, Manitoba; a monotonous series of simple notes so undistinctive that they might be anything (Cornell University). Japanese Snipe: a variety of grating calls against quite a strong background of small passerines and a cuckoo, a veritable "spring cantata" (Radio Japan). Turnstone: an excited sequence of rapidly repeated notes, some of which can, I think, be heard in New Zealand flocks, but the tape was made in June in South Finland.

"Asiatic" Whimbrel: song, calls and alarm notes near nest, recorded in Finnish Lapland and Sweden in June; glorious sounds, beautifully recorded, surely the most exciting passage on the disc. American Whimbrel: recorded on 8 March in Massachusetts, flying over a marsh, presumably on passage, though the date seems too early. The two whimbrels differ strongly but, as the recordings were made at quite different times in the annual cycle, the difference may not be significant. Bristle-thighed Curlew: in flight at Oeno Island (88 km NW of Pitcairn), thus in winter quarters; a musical *tee-a-wee* call echoed apparently by others in the distance. Upland Plover: recorded in New

Jersey in June; strident whistles, sometimes repeated as a chatter, but calls of other species in the background make identification somewhat hazardous.

Naturalists who regularly observe waders may benefit from having these tapes on tap but their value would have been increased by more documentation (of other bird calls in the background and of behavioural setting). Ideally, each species should be represented by song on breeding grounds, flight calls, alarm calls, and calls in winter quarters, all identified as such. This should soon be possible, to judge by the tape resources Les McPherson has been able to draw upon already.

— C. A. FLEMING

*Australian bird calls. Series Two: Western Australia*, by John N. Hutchinson. Available from author, Balingu 6253, Western Australia. \$Aust 8.00 per cassette or disc, post paid.

This stereo cassette contains the songs or calls of 25 Australian birds and three atmosphere or habitat recordings and is the equal of the earlier disc by this author.

The only complaint I have is that there is no verbal introduction to each species but this is offset to some degree by the use of a data sheet which comes with the tape and indicates precise times when a given species starts its song or call. Other information on the sheet includes the background sounds per channel, the date of recording, locality, time, temperature and the cloud type and wind.

One of the most striking recordings is of a Kangaroo hopping past the recording station from left to right, together with a strong background chorus from four bird species, three of which feature as soloists later in the recording. The only species that was on Mr Hutchinson's first disc and appears again is the White-tailed Cockatoo, a species over which there is much discussion at present. The early disc gave an example of song from the Long-billed, while the new one gives an example from the Short-billed variety.

This cassette is by far the most superior I have heard so far. There is none of the background rumble so common to pre-recorded cassettes of natural sound these days. Mr Hutchinson is to be very highly commended for this fine-quality recording.

— L. B. McPHERSON



## SHORT NOTE

### TUIS FLYING WITH BILLS OPEN

On 27 January 1978, a very hot day, the temperature being about 30°, flax at the Mt. Bruce Bird Sanctuary was still in flower and about a dozen TuIs were feeding on the nectar. In every instance when the birds were seen in flight they had their bills open, apparently as a cooling action.

R. STIDOLPH, *Masterton*