

Volume 1 provides an introduction to the class Aves with a wide-ranging section on various aspects: classification, physiology, biology, behaviour, relationship to man, conservation status etc., which sets the pattern for the treatment of the orders and families which follow. The first volume has much of interest for the New Zealand reader as it covers many of the orders and families familiar to us. Later volumes are not likely to have the same direct interest, apart from the one dealing with Charadriiformes.

The classification used is the traditional one, not the new Sibley and Monroe system based on DNA, and many will be happier with this approach. It does, however, provide a comparative table so that the two systems can be cross referenced. The authors have gathered a tremendous wealth of data together and this is reflected in the list of references (over 6000). One may criticise the lack of Southern Hemisphere advisers but perhaps these were not needed in view of the number of regional handbooks currently in production which have already covered in detail the orders and families encompassed by this volume.

As for accuracy, one can judge such a work only by its treatment of the species with which one is familiar. The authors have done very well and have obviously kept as up to date as practicable on new information as it has come to hand. Naturally there are some minor omissions and errors but these are not significant.

Overall the publication is well presented and all species (and most distinctive races) are illustrated as promised. The photographs are well chosen and generally they avoid the stereotype portrait. They are interesting and illustrate behaviour, habitat, etc. The distributional maps are small but adequate. The book is one many would like to own so that they could delve into it regularly. However, some would find the price (£95) rather off-putting, especially when they consider there are a further nine volumes to follow. Those who do acquire it will, I am sure, find it good value.

[Available from Birdlife International, Wellbrook Court, Girton Road, Cambridge, U.K. CB3 0NA]

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*Storks, Ibises and Spoonbills of the World*, by James A. Hancock, James A. Kushlan and M. Philip Kahl, 1992. Academic Press, London. 385 pp. £65.00. ISBN 0-12-322730-5.

The combined effort of the very experienced authors, three authorities on the subject, and the skills of the two artists have produced an outstanding reference work on some of the world's largest and most spectacular birds.

The book is in two parts. The first part has chapters on classification, conservation, courtship and reproduction, feeding behaviour and ecology, illustrated with some magnificent photographs.

The main part deals in great detail with all of the species from the five continents, discussing with apparent accuracy all aspects of distribution and population, biology, ecology, breeding, taxonomy and conservation. The writers in their introduction state: "Some species are found in large

spectacular assemblies and others in crepuscular isolation. Some of the species were once widespread and common, but are now at or near to extinction. Others have always been rare, with limited ranges and highly specialized ecological niches about which little is known." Unfortunately it has indeed become very obvious that many of them are endangered species, mainly due to loss of their wetland habitat.

The illustrations are true to colour and it's nice to see that habitats are included in the paintings.

Large range maps are used and give a clear idea of breeding, migration pattern and overwintering habitats, but show that this work is not really aimed at the New Zealand reader.

It is unfortunate that New Zealand is hardly mentioned in the two species applicable to NZ. No reference is made of straggling Glossy Ibises to NZ, and on the range map for the Glossy Ibis on page 164, the South Island of New Zealand has been omitted.

The only reference to the breeding of Royal Spoonbills is to the Okarito and Blenheim birds and a rather incorrect distribution reference to Otago birds is included, really meaning the roosting Spoonbills at the Manawatu Estuary. With little effort the latest information available in HANZAB (Marchant & Higgins 1990) could have been included. Ironically this reference is one of over 4000 used in this work, but not on Royal Spoonbills.

Under the chapter "Conservation" the writers state "There appear to be only a few Royal Spoonbill breeding colonies of significant size. However, in general, the species seems to be doing well in Australia, the stronghold of its range, and expanding slowly in outlying areas such as New Zealand." The New Zealand colonies are not of a significant size, but the expansion rate since the establishment of the colony at Maukiekie Island in North Otago in 1983/1984 and the latest colony in Southland in 1992/1993 is not as slow as stated.

A very useful addition is the appendix, which gives body and egg measurements and months of egg-laying of most species.

The opportunity is now here to be able to consult a beautiful reference work, even though only two species out of the 49 occur in New Zealand, and should be a must for those readers favouring these birds close to home, in Australia or farther afield. The price, however, might exclude some potential readers.

It will be a useful companion to *The Herons Handbook*, by Hancock, J. and Kushlan, J. 1984, Croom Helm, London.

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