

REVIEW

Cockatoos

Matt Cameron

CSIRO Publishing, 2007. Collingwood, Australia. ISBN 9780643092327. 220 pp., including 21 colour photographs. Paperback. AU\$39.95.

Cockatoos (Cacatuidae: Psittaciformes) have long fascinated naturalists and ornithologists alike. However, there are only a handful of books or monographs devoted entirely to this family of birds, most of them from an avicultural perspective. Among the exceptions is the recently published book by Matt Cameron. Cameron's *Cockatoos* is a laudable attempt to summarise what is known about this interesting group of birds. The book is organised into 11 chapters. Each begins with a brief introduction and follows with a variety of sections discussing topics relevant to that chapter. Chapters 1 and 2 provide an overall introduction to the cockatoos, their distinguishing features, and scientific names, diversity and general distribution. Both chapters include good quality black and white photographs. Chapter 3 addresses cockatoo evolution and biogeography and describes the physical differences in cockatoos between regions. Chapter 4 "dissects" the cockatoo anatomy and discusses the diagnostic features of these birds within a comparative framework. Chapter 5 focuses on the habitats and distribution of cockatoos and discusses briefly their basic environmental requirements. This chapter also includes 21 superb photographs of mostly Australian cockatoo species. Chapter 6 describes the movements of several species and their context (i.e., seasonal, breeding related, etc.). Chapter 7 addresses food and feeding and provides numerous examples of the different diets of each species as well as their foraging behaviour. Chapter 8 discusses cockatoo reproduction, nesting preferences and presents a succinct summary of breeding parameters for all known species. Chapter 9 centres on the topic of cockatoos as pests and provides figures of the magnitude of damage cockatoos can cause in agricultural fields. Chapter 10 discusses trade in cockatoos and provides a number of examples from Australasian countries and an overview of a number of captive breeding programmes for cockatoos within Australia. Chapter 11 examines the conservation status of cockatoos, current pressures and a summary of research priorities that could assist management plans for these birds.

Although the book succeeds at introducing the reader to the diversity and biology of cockatoos, there are a few weaknesses. The first problem I

encountered was the lack of consistency and detail on maps. Most maps were only outlines of Australia or nearby countries. Cameron mentions names of localities in the text but all maps lack reference points (i.e., capital cities, states boundaries, etc). Another problem throughout the text is a non-standard scientific referencing system. Although it is explained that this was adopted to make the book more reader-friendly, the adopted system repeatedly creates uncertainty regarding figures and facts. For example, Cameron states there have been "cockatoo extinctions due to human impact" in the past 10 000 years (p. 45), however no citation to support his point is provided (although this is highlighted as a key event in the cockatoo evolution timeline). It is unclear if Cameron refers to extinctions of parrot species on Pacific islands (Steadman 2006) or to local extinctions of populations. A few problems also arise in nomenclature. Cameron uses the scientific name *Lophochroa leadbeateri* for the pink cockatoo instead of *Cacatua leadbeateri* but he does not explain why this change has been adopted. It is unclear if Cameron recognises *Lophochroa* at the generic level and what is the evidence supporting his view. *Lophochroa* is recognised at the subgeneric level, so if he intended to highlight the subgenera within cockatoos, use must adhere to the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature; in this case the resulting name should be *Cacatua (Lophochroa) leadbeateri*. Finally, there is one important omission. Cameron does not mention introduced populations of cockatoos outside their natural geographical range and the ecological consequences of these introductions. Perhaps the best example is the deliberate releases of pet sulphur-crested cockatoo (*Cacatua galerita*) and galah (*Eolophus roseicapillus*) in New Zealand (Long 1981; Heather & Robertson 1996; Juniper and Parr 1998). Nevertheless, these problems are relatively minor and this book is an interesting addition to the literature. It will be a valuable reference for both amateur ornithologists and parrot biologists.

Literature Cited

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