

resenting more than 750 species. The subjects of the photographs (taken by a variety of photographers, Jon Hornbuckle foremost among them) include both birds in the hand and free-ranging birds. The photographs show the usual variation in quality, ranging from well-lit, close-range, spectacular images (e.g. Sunbittern [*Eurypyga helias*]) to dark or backlit selections that may serve little purpose (e.g. Yellow-billed Nunbird [*Monasa flavirostris*]). As with the sound recordings, for most (but not all) of the photographs one can call up a map that highlights the location where the photograph was taken. A surprise is the inclusion of photographs of more than 100 species that have not been recorded in Bolivia. A few of these are known to range to the very borders of Bolivia, so their inclusion here seems reasonable (e.g. Ornate Flycatcher [*Myiorticcus ornatus*], Chestnut-capped Brush-Finch [*Burarrmon brunneinuchus*]). Most of the extralimital species shown in the photographs, however, do not occur within hundreds of kilometers of Bolivia; that said, this set includes some of the most arresting photographs on the disk, such as a male Marvelous Spatuletail (*Loddigesia mirabilis*) in flight. For any users who are seriously offended by the inclusion of these photographs, there is an option that will "hide" from view the names of these species.

The disk has two other interesting features. A program that presents a succession of sounds, slides, or slides and sounds in conjunction can be used as a test of one's identification skills or as review (or simply as a treat). In addition, one can open several windows at the same time, which is useful in facilitating comparisons between the sounds or photographs of different species.

The reviewer of the first edition of this disk wrote, "my biggest criticism is that I want more." Mayer rose to the challenge and has provided much more: more songs, more photographs, the works. Although this may not seem fair to Mayer, it remains the case that "my biggest criticism is that I want more." For example, perhaps at least some of the site descriptions could be supplemented with photographs of the habitat(s) present; maps, even crude maps, of the distribution of each species within Bolivia could be presented; and the photographs could be supplemented with a little bit of text, perhaps something to call attention to field marks.

These suggestions should take nothing away from my favorable impressions of what Mayer has created: an important tool for anyone interested in the vocalizations, field identification, and distribution of Neotropical birds. Everyone, regardless of level of expertise, will learn something from this disk, and most users will find it a very handy learning tool indeed.—THOMAS S. SCHULENBERG, *Environmental and Conservation Programs, Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, Illinois 60605, USA.*

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**Where to Watch Birds in Australasia and Oceania.**—Nigel Wheatley. 1998. Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey. 448 pp., 90 maps, 50 line drawings. ISBN 0-691-00231-2. Cloth, \$35.00.—Back in 1981, Peter Alden and John Gooders authored a book entitled *Where to Watch Birds Around the World*. It introduced the globetrotting field ornithologist to 111 sites and included hand-drawn maps and bird lists for each locale. It certainly wetted my appetite for birding travel, but I understand that the book was not a commercial success; perhaps it was published too soon. Prior to the early 1980s, travel in many emerging nations was very difficult; the Cold War precluded visits to some areas, and some of the greatest birds in the world were completely inaccessible or so rare that nobody knew how a visiting observer could find them. Included in the list of "hopeless" birds at this time were such spectacular prizes as the Takahe (*Porphyrio mantelli*) of New Zealand, the Plains-wanderer (*Pedionomus torquatus*) of interior Australia, Wilson's Bird of Paradise (*Cicinnurus respublica*) of western New Guinea, and the mysterious Kagu (*Rhynochetos jubatus*) of New Caledonia. Alden and Gooders' book had directions to none of these species, and only the Kagu was mentioned (their New Caledonia account stated that one of the authors had seen a Kagu 15 years before on Mt. Koghi, and they expressed the hope that it "may still survive").

Now, almost 20 years later, Nigel Wheatley's book—the fourth in a series designed to cover the entire globe—tells you exactly how to find each of these wonderful birds. I've been lucky enough to have seen all of them within the last decade. I located them through study of travel reports from other bird-watchers, much correspondence, and arrangements with local guides and experts. Wheatley has obviously done the hours of preparation necessary and has packaged that information together in a very accessible format. The book covers all of Australasia and Oceania, north to Guam and Hawaii, east to the Pitcairn Islands, and south to Antarctica. In total, more than 160 sites are covered in some detail. (Avifaunally, Halmahera and the Moluccas should also have been in this book, but they appear in Wheatley's Asia book; this is a minor quibble.)

Each country, archipelago, or major island is introduced by summaries of the rewards and challenges of visiting that locale, followed by individual site details that focus on the endemic and specialty birds. Unlike Alden and Gooders' book, space is not wasted on columns of lists of common species. Instead, bird lists are written in paragraph style, and the entire

approach is aimed at steering the traveler to the rare and spectacular birds he or she hopes to find.

A breezy British "can-do" attitude permeates the entire project. Of Irian Jaya, Wheatley writes that "seeing the best birds in what is one of the wildest places left on earth involves overcoming time-consuming logistical problems such as organising guides, porters, supplies and boat for what amounts to expensive mini-expeditions, and tackling some very tough trails, many of which are steep and muddy. Such problems are surmountable, however, and the rewards, which include MacGregor's and Wilson's birds-of-paradise, are out of this world." Thus, obstacles are there to be overcome, birds there to be seen, and successes finished off with "the appropriate celebration of another great day in the field."

I've done these mini-expeditions, and, yes, the "problems are surmountable," but Wheatley's advice does not adequately express the level of difficulty involved in Irian Jaya, even when it is open to western tourists (it is currently closed due to political unrest). Getting to Batanta Island where the Wilson's Bird of Paradise resides is hard enough (the longboats that must be organized to take observers there travel for two to four hours in rough seas while one is packed below in fume-filled bottom carriage; survival should the top-heavy craft capsizes is problematic), but if one survived, the text would get one to the basic "hut-on-stilts" where camps can be established. The Wilson's Bird of Paradise display grounds is said to be "one to two hours up. . . a steep trail" where a "viewing screen" has been erected. Well, yes and no. A blind does exist up a very, very steep and muddy trail. For me, middle-aged and out of shape, the trail up took three hours, and the bird was not coming to the "usual" site. No one in our party saw the Wilson's on the first try, and by the next day several of us were just not physically able to go back up for another effort. Fortunately, we had great local guides who found another male and built another viewing screen on the spot with native reeds and leaves (male Wilson's Birds of Paradise will not visit their display sites if they detect your presence). Some of us had an "out-of-this-world" experience, but the effort was much more difficult than the book suggests, and finding the bird was much harder than Wheatley indicates.

Indeed, at site after site that I reviewed in the text, Wheatley underestimates the difficulty of finding the prized species. For example, Wheatley lists six "rare and spectacular birds" that are possible at Baiyer River Wildlife Sanctuary in Papua New Guinea (a site presently inaccessible due to safety concerns). In several days of heavy-duty birding back in 1983 when it was open and safe, my colleagues and I saw only one-and-a-half of the six species Wheatley mentions (the "half" was the hind-end of a Dwarf Casowary [*Casuarius bennetti*] running away into the forest). Birds are just not easy to find in New Guinea.

An "expectations" section is given for each country and site; having visited almost all of the Irian Jaya locales, the "expectations" listed were unrealistically optimistic, both in the number of species to be found during a short visit, and in the chances for the specialties. However, I very much approve of Wheatley's cautious approach to safety issues in Papua New Guinea, and this book provides the necessary warnings for travel to this area and the useful tips needed to make one's visit safe.

An enormous amount of very useful information is packed into these pages. The hand-drawn maps are very helpful, and the lists of contacts in many places are invaluable (Phil Maher for Plains-wanderer, or details on getting out to Tiritiri Matangi Island off North Island, New Zealand, for Takahe, Saddleback [*Philesturnus carunculatus*], Stitchbird [*Notiomystis cincta*], and others). Wheatley warns early on that sites and access directions are constantly changing, and that the book's purpose is meant as a first point of reference for the traveling birdwatcher to be supplemented later by updated trip reports and local contacts.

These caveats certainly applied to a recent visit to the island of New Caledonia in search of the Kagu, a bird brought back from the edge of extinction by the work of Yves Letocart and colleagues that studied its biology, by the removal of nonnative predators, and by captive breeding (I was surprised to find no reference to Yves or his work in the book). *Where to Watch Birds* was published late in 1998; it says one needed a permit in advance to visit the Parc Provincial de la Riviere Bleue and a local guide to see the Kagu. Neither was true by January 1999, however, when I visited the park. One simply paid the entrance fee as one drove in (just like any American national park), and the Kagu was located without assistance at various places in the park, including the parking lot for the giant Kaori tree that is mentioned in Wheatley's text. The park can be crowded on weekends (mentioned in the text) but is closed on Mondays (not mentioned); visitors may camp (mentioned), but the park is an easy hour's drive from Noumea on good roads (not mentioned). Local observers told me that the site for New Caledonian Grassbirds (*Megalurulus mariei*) on Mt. Koghi no longer hosts this species (Wheatley's text heavily emphasizes this site for the grassbird). So, this book fills exactly its intended role: a great starting point that should be supplemented by updated information. It will become more and more outdated with the passage of time, but I believe the overall information will be useful for decades.

Australia and New Zealand take up a large portion of the text. Details for the sites I've visited generally were quite good, but they were not without minor problems or omissions. On the Atherton Tablelands in northeastern Australia, *Where to Watch Birds* directs one to fine birding and lodging at Kingfisher

Caravan Park (located in a remnant patch of forest that still hosts breeding Buff-breasted Paradise-Kingfishers [*Tanysiptera sylvia*] in the austral summer), but it omits the better birding and chance for a wild Southern Cassowary (*Casuarius casuarius*) at nearby Cassowary House, a bed-and-breakfast operated by expert local birders. To be sure, Cassowary House is more expensive, but the chance for a cassowary and birding in virgin forest may be worth the price for some travelers (their web site is <www.cassowary-house.com.au>). Wheatley's text is perhaps too narrowly aimed at the "independent budget birder," as he addresses his audience.

By far the weakest link is the bibliography. Alden and Gooders' book had a fine selection of literature, but this new effort has barely 1.5 pages. Although admitting that it is meant only as an initial "guiding light," *Where to Watch Birds* omits numerous more-focused spotlights found in the specialized bird-finding guides. Not everything is available in individual trip reports or on the web; at a minimum, the bibliography should have included references such as Wieneke's (1995) *Where to Find Birds in Northeast Queensland* and Chambers' (1989) *Birds of New Zealand, Locality Guide*. The short list of "useful books" fails to mention such crucial texts for New Guinea as Coates' two-volume (1985, 1990) *The Birds of Papua New Guinea*, or such resources as Beehler's (1978) *Upland Birds of Northeastern New Guinea* and Diamond's (1972) *Avifauna of the Eastern Highland of New Guinea*. The listing of "family" books omits the marvelous monograph on fairy-wrens by Schodde (1982) and the classic books on birds of paradise (i.e. Gilliard 1969, Cooper and Forshaw 1977, Firth and Beehler 1998). Instead, recent "cookie cutter" volumes from Pica Press and others are favored. Throughout, there may be too much emphasis on the here and now and too little appreciation for the work that has gone on before. Yet, even this attitude is nicely balanced by an eloquent introductory discussion of conservation in this part of the world.

Overall, *Where to Watch Birds in Australasia and Oceania* is a very fine effort that is packed with indispensable information for travelers. Accuracy is quite high, and optimism even higher! I enjoyed reading the personal stories and the entertaining Briticisms (like the "really cracking" endemics on Maui, or the emphasis on finding the local brew with which to celebrate at day's end). There are indices to bird species (by English names only; an index of scientific names should have been included) and to sites. Given that it contains 448 pages and a hard cover, the book is remarkably lightweight, so carrying it will not unduly burden one's baggage. I highly recommend it to the traveling birdwatcher anywhere within the huge scope of its coverage.—DON ROBERSON, 282 Grove Acre, Pacific Grove, California 93950, USA.

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**Birding in the American West: A Handbook.**—Kevin J. Zimmer. 2000. Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York. x + 402 pages, 111 text figures. ISBN 0-8014-3257-X. Cloth, \$49.95. ISBN 0-8014-8328-X. Paper, \$25.00.—This indeed is a handbook in name and size, but it is well suited as a "handy book" for many reasons. The pages are packed with useful information for North American birders of just about any orientation or level of accomplishment except, perhaps, for the few so advanced as to be qualified to research and write such a formidable work themselves. Although definitely focused on the West, this volume would be of value even to those easterners who may never intend (heaven forbid!) to visit the West in pursuit of its birdlife. The author's definition of "West" includes the 18 continental states west of the line running from the eastern border of North Dakota and intervening states to Texas. However, with respect to scope of content, Zimmer departs from the conventional.

Approximately one-fourth of the book (Chapter 5)