

REVIEWS AND ABSTRACTS

by M.W. Pienkowski, R.W. Summers and A.G. Wood

MEAD, Chris 1983. BIRD MIGRATION. pp. 224, Numerous colour and monochrome photographs, line drawings and maps. Countrylife Books, Feltham, Middlesex, England. £9-95.

In recent years, useful and interesting books about birds (and other aspects of natural history) seemed to have been replaced on the shelves of bookshops by lots of almost identical pocket-guides to identification (rarely coming up to the standards of their predecessors) and "guides to bird watching". It is therefore refreshing to see a new book clearly aimed at a "popular" audience but trying a new format. Most books on bird migration try either to treat each species in turn or to review the various general aspects of the subject. This volume lies nearer the latter pattern but includes a large number of specific examples, each based on a map. The species are drawn from a wide range of bird families, and include examples from both Europe and America. While presumably intended partly to make the book readily acceptable to both markets (and the 'bilingual' main text in cases where terminology differs supports this), this feature should also widen the horizons of bird-watchers in both areas - whose outlooks can be surprisingly parochial in view of the subject concerned.

An introduction on the general nature of migration and reasons for it is concluded by a quick look at major groups. This is followed by a fascinating chapter on the history of bird migration studies, from the Bible and other classical sources onwards. Then comes the long chapter noted earlier giving examples of the migrations of particular species, often (as one might expect from the author's employment in running the bird-ringing scheme in Britain and Ireland) making good use of ringing (or banding) recoveries. Old and New World Warblers are given quite extensive treatment but also included at least briefly are swifts and martins; soaring migrants; wildfowl; waders; seabirds; and some more passerines. A little more on the possible reasons for some of the striking differences in migration patterns shown would have been welcome.

We return to general chapters with "Making the journey", particularly concerned with aerodynamics, fat reserves, flight ranges, migration in relation to weather, altitude, and making a landfall. Many of the varied ideas on navigation are described in "Finding the way"; and annual cycles and some mention of population dynamics in "The annual accounts". The general chapters of this type end with "The evolution of migration".

Although methods of investigating migration are mentioned in appropriate places throughout the book, a penultimate chapter on "Investigating migration" reviews the methods by which we reached our present state of knowledge. This chapter is well integrated with the material presented earlier and avoids excessive repetition. It is probably a very effective way of explaining to the newcomer to the subject, who will have been interested in the conclusions outlined earlier, the reason for some of the strange things done to birds by many workers. A final short chapter on "Observing migration for oneself" advises the total novice how to start looking at birds in a questioning way.

This is an interesting book, obviously written by someone enthused with his subject. I feel that, despite its many good points, it is let down in two areas. The first concerns production, and I can only suppose that the author has been badly served by his publishers. Clearly someone has an aversion to a conventional system of referring to illustrations by numbers. This might work provided that the figures occurred near to the relevant part of the text. Unfortunately this is rarely the case, leading to a very distracting form of presentation. Figures one had not realized existed to amplify a complex explanation may be chanced upon several pages later, and others confusingly presented well in advance of the relevant text. The situation is as bad in the species treatment early in the book, for which all the maps are grouped after the main text, there being generally no indication in the text whether or not a map is presented for any particular species. I personally find this type of reading rather distracting, especially when combined with the tendency to put separate bits of text in with the figures. This problem seems to have been noticed progressively during the editing as, towards the end of the book, references like "as shown by the diagram on page ..." become more frequent. Unfortunately, however, in several places, the sub-editor has omitted to change the page number from p. 000 or xxx after the pages were made up. In places where the sub-editor does appear to have woken, he has inserted the wrong page numbers, and elsewhere figures or tables have clearly been rearranged without appropriate changes to their captions. In places, however, he has added to our enjoyment by allowing through such delightful phrases as that concerning the Shelduck which "produces large broods of young which are often found, joined together, in creches." Another gem is the species of tern in which "the young may start to defend burrows" (p154).

Some of the diagrams leave a lot to be desired, especially where they are essential in explaining very technical points. The usual problems are the lack of an adequate key to abbreviations, missing axes and lack of grammar in captions. Some maps also suffer: I wonder why some of the breeding grounds of the Brent Goose *Branta bernicla* were chopped off the top of the map, while vast tracts of the unvisited tropics were left on the bottom. We cannot blame the author for these faults either: "The Haywood Art Group" claim credit.

The usual clarity of writing and enthusiasm of the author shine through these production problems in most sections, making the errors mainly an irritant. My other area of concern is more substantial: that it is often difficult to distinguish between an idea which is only presented as a possibility, and one for which there is evidence to support the hypothesis. This means that whilst the book provides an excellent introduction to many of the concepts involved in the wide field of bird migration, it does not indicate clearly what it is reasonable to accept as well established and what not. Correspondingly, I would happily recommend it to someone who wanted an introduction to the whole of the subject, or a part of it with which they were unfamiliar - but I would be very concerned if I saw the book itself cited as a source of information. As this is a review in *WSG Bulletin*, I shall

illustrate this by an example from shorebirds. On pp 154-5 we are given the information that the migration routes differ between Greenlandic-Canadian breeding Knots *Calidris canutus* less than one year of age and older birds, with the former but not the latter visiting Norway. Also that adult Knots arrive in Iceland in March/April and birds in their first year in late April, and that Knots first return to their breeding grounds at about one year old, but probably too late to breed. Much of this may be true, but I am unaware of the evidence. Especially having studied that migration, I would like to know the source of this information, but there is no way I can follow this up directly from the book.

One would obviously not expect full literature citing in a book aimed at the 'popular' market but a fairly extensive bibliography would seem a good idea for another reason. It is rather a pity that Chris Mead's obvious talent for enthusing his reader to want to discover more of the subject may lead to frustration - for, despite the technical nature of quite a lot of material presented, sources are not given for most, except where copyright regulations require this when diagrams are reproduced. The bibliography consists mainly of rather 'heavy' (in all senses) handbooks to various regions, advanced review texts and even, in a couple of cases, books of source data. Several of these are almost certainly unobtainable through ordinary bookshops. This seems a rare case of an author or publisher underestimating the potential interest of his work!

If I have perhaps dwelt overlong on the faults of the book, this is mainly because I feel a good idea could have been exploited even better with a little extra effort. Despite these faults, I would recommend the book as a good, and generally readable, introduction, especially for readers in N. America or Europe, to the sorts of ideas in play in the study of bird migration. I would hope those that develop their interest soon find their way into original material (much of which in ornithology is still very readable to a newcomer).

Finally, do not be put off by the birds on the cover which (British readers may think) seem to resemble the pantomime geese from "The Goodies" television programme.

H.W. Pienkowski

Cooper, J. (ed.) 1981. PROCEEDINGS OF THE SYMPOSIUM OF BIRDS OF THE SEA AND SHORE. Pp 473. Published by the African Seabird Group, Fitzpatrick Institute, Rondebosch 7700, South Africa. Price R25 (plus R2 postage).

This Symposium was held during 19-21 November 1979 at the University of Cape Town, South Africa. The proceedings, totalling 473 pages, is comprised of 37 papers, of which only 12 refer to waders. Of these, eight were based on work done in South Africa. The remaining four were European studies. Unfortunately, only abstracts have been published for four of the South African studies and one of the European. Those published in full are summarised below.

Philip Hockey described the feeding techniques of the African Black Oystercatcher *Haematopus moquini*, particularly when it was feeding on mussels and limpets which are the most important items of diet. Differences with other species of oystercatcher are discussed.

Manfred Waltner and Ian Sinclair described the distribution, biometrics and moult of the Terek Sandpiper *Tringa terek*. This species is uncommon in southern Africa, and the South

African population is probably less than 1000. Like many Palearctic waders occurring in Africa, the young birds carry out a moult of the outer primaries and many overwinter (austral winter) in their first year. Ringing recoveries have been made in Ethiopia and Russia.

Les Underhill carried out a cluster analysis on data collected by the Western Cape Wader Study Group (WCWSG) on wader populations in South Africa and Namibia. Seven major clusters were identified, based largely on the relative abundances of Sanderlings *Calidris alba*, Turnstones *Arenaria interpres* and White-fronted Sandpipers *Charadrius marginatus*. The analysis has implications for conservation, for it identifies distinct wader communities worthy of protection. Les is currently refining and improving techniques of analysing data on shorebird communities.

The WCWSG has been carrying out also regular winter and summer counts at Langebaan Lagoon (Cape Province). H.G. Robertson examined the data collected from 1975-1979. The number of overwintering (austral winter) Palearctic waders gave an indication of the breeding success in the previous year.

Peter Ferns described the seasonal and annual changes in the numbers and distribution of shorebirds on the Severn Estuary, England. The numbers of wintering Ringed Plovers *Charadrius hiaticula*, Dunlins *Calidris alpina* and Redshanks *Tringa totanus* increased over the seven years of the study. Seasonal changes in distribution were noted for some species, but not others. The distribution varied also from year-to-year, perhaps in response to changes in prey distribution. Such changes highlight the problem in attempting to assess the impact of estuarine development upon shorebirds.

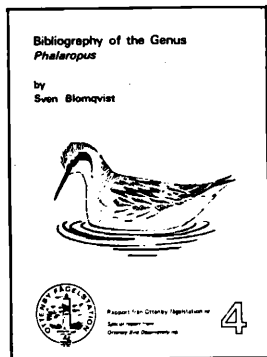
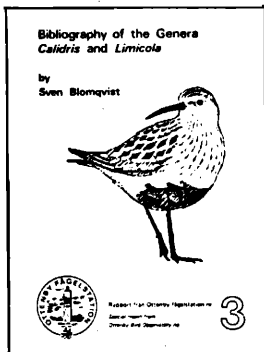
Gerlof Th. de Roos discussed the importance of the Isle of Vlieland, in the Dutch Wadden Sea, for breeding and wintering waders. 16 000 waders normally winter here. Several species nest, but breeding success is influenced by tourist pressure. Nest losses have been reduced by fencing off sections of dunes, and this has led to an increase in numbers of breeding Oystercatchers *Haematopus ostralegus*.

Tony Prater gave a review of the pattern of primary moult in Palearctic waders. A broad comparison was made between those species which spend the non-breeding season in northern latitudes, and those that migrate to the tropics or southern latitudes. Those species or populations which winter in the north tend to have an uncomplicated and quick moult before the winter, whilst those waders which winter (boreal winter) in the tropics or southern latitudes have a longer moult season and a complex pattern. For example, partial and suspended moult occurs, and first-year birds, particularly the smaller species, tend to have a supplemental moult. There is still much to learn about moult patterns, but the problem is further complicated by the lack of international standardisation of methods.

Ron Summers

Blomquist, S. 1983. BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THE GENERA *CALIDRIS* AND *LIMICOLA*. Pp.103. Special Report from Ottenby Bird Observatory No. 3. Price Swedish Kr. 45 from Ottenby Bird Observatory, P1. 1500, S-380 65 Degerhamn, Sweden.

Blomquist, S. 1983. BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THE GENUS *PHALAROPUS*. Pp.28. Special Report from Ottenby Bird Observatory No. 4. Price Swedish Kr. 25, available as above.



Avid readers of the 'Recent Publications' section of the *WSG Bulletin* must at times feel tedium too much to bear when they read of the twentieth paper about Oystercatchers - especially when they are interested in the foraging behaviour of Sanderlings! Well, here are two genera-specific bibliographies, listing alphabetically (by author) most known references on three genera of waders: *Calidris*, *Limicola* and *Phalaropus*. These publications of the Ottenby Bird Observatory will be particularly useful for those workers new to the field, but should also produce some interesting reading for seasoned researchers. The bibliographies contain all known papers on the species within each genus covered, up to and including 1980; however, on their own admission the referencing for books and theses is not comprehensive. Good for finding out what is published on these waders in your non-native language.

Andy Hood

LIST OF MEMBERS - CHANGES SINCE BULLETIN 39

NEW MEMBERS

Britain and Ireland

Hutchinson, C. 11 Knockree Park, Douglas Road, Cork, Ireland.

ICBP, Attn. P.Gorup, 219c Huntingdon Road, Cambridge, CB3 0DL, U.K.

Johnson, G. 36 Three But Lane, West Derby, Liverpool, L12 7HF, U.K.

Sharr, C. 43 Oak Drive, Higham, Rochester, Kent, ME3 7BD, U.K.

Wells, M.J. University College, Zoology Department, Cathays Park, PO Box 78, Cardiff, CF1 1XL, U.K.

Rest of Europe

Araujo, A. CEMPA, R. du Lapa 73, 1200 Lisboa, Portugal.

Hilden, O. Zoology Department, University of Helsinki, P Rautatiekatu 13, 00100 Helsinki 10, Finland.

Lambeck, R. Dijkwelsestraat 14, 4421 AH Kapelle, Netherlands.

Rappoldt, K. Emmastraat 53, 1814 DM Alkmaar, Netherlands.

Rattenberg, N. Koldingvej 27, NR Logum, 6240 Logumkloster, Denmark.

Wymenga, E. Mounehoek 42, 9263 TL Garyp, Netherlands.

Elsewhere

Kunde, M. 441 Lilac Drive, Los Osos, CA 93402, U.S.A.

McCaffery, B.J. Neurobiology and Behaviour, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14850, U.S.A.

Purdy, M.A. 212 Victoria Street, Amherst, Nova Scotia, B4H 1Y9, Canada.

Tye, A. Zoology Department, Fourah Bay College, University of Sierra Leone, Freetown, Sierra Leone.

CHANGES AND CORRECTIONS

Europe

Koopman, K. Tunkeing 5, 8501 TG Joure, Netherlands.

Moller, H.S. Frederiksvej 10 ST TV, DK 2000 Copenhagen F, Denmark.

Sueur, F. Rue du Bosquet, 80120 Rue, France.

Wilson, J.R. Granveien 46, 1911 Flateby, Norway.

North America

Lank, D. 357 E 15th Avenue, Apartment B, Columbus, OH 43201, U.S.A.

Library, Merriam Laboratory, US Fish & Wildlife Service, Patuxent Wildlife Reserve, Laurel, MD 20708, U.S.A.

RESIGNATION

Europe

Mullie, W.C. Rijkswaterstaat Directie Deltadienst.