

REVIEWS

Salathe, T. (ed). 1991. *Conserving migratory birds*. ICBP Tech. Publ. No. 12, Cambridge. xi + 393.

This is an ambitious work with an impressive array of papers covering a wide range of problems and projects. These include the global (West Palearctic-African, Asian-Australasian and American flyways), the specific (White Storks, pelicans) and the local (shorebirds in Barbados, Grey-faced Buzzard-eagle and Brown Shrike in Taiwan). There are case studies on the growth of national conservation awareness (Turkey, Malta), and on the wider benefits that can be gained from flagship species (a programme to protect the Roseate Tern in Ghana that produced results far beyond the initial objective).

Inevitably, many of the papers are depressing, but all carry a universal message of what should be done and what might be achieved. Unfortunately, while the general reasons for decline in bird populations are readily acknowledged (habitat loss and degradation, pesticides, hunting), much less is known of the scientific detail upon which conservationists can take action. A study on the use of pesticides in the western Sahel has particular relevance to the rice bowls of the tropics, but demonstrates the problems of relating cause and effect in a science that is so complicated by variables; one of the primary recommendations of this study is the introduction of integrated pest control methods, as has been successfully developed by FAO in Java, although this reviewer has yet to observe, or see any report on, the impact of this programme on bird life in the rice fields.

More than in any other field of bird conservation, the protection of migratory birds is a global problem. However, while the professionals formulate international treaties and the scientists continue to research the inter-relationships, perhaps the most vital are those often self-effacing individuals, who work at the level of the remote village communities and school children without whose support conservation will be just a dream. But, as Dr. Imboden implies in his Foreword, the activities of those communities depend substantially on the wider problems of poverty, population growth, debt, and the "world's global exchange economy".

Perhaps it would be unjust criticism to accuse ornithologists in Indonesia of inevitably concentrating on the resident endemics at the expense of migratory birds, because it is the soundness of habitats that matters for both residents and migrants. Nevertheless, we know extremely little about our migrants, and as Dr. Somadikarta once recalled, he can remember days past when migrating pratincoles "darkened the skies" over northern Java; this species is a prime target of those who trap birds in the swamps of Java for a living, and while it is still common, nobody knows the extent of the impact on its population.

The same phrase was used by this reviewer for Rosy Pastors in Sind (Pakistan) in the 1960s and Turtle-doves and Ruff in the Chad basin in the 1970s - do they still darken the skies today? Already in the early 1960s, it was apparent that migratory waterfowl in Sind (Holmes & Wright, 1969, *J. Bombay Nat. Hist. Soc.* 65-66) had decreased substantially since Ticehurst (1922-24, *Ibis* 4-6) reviewed the birds of the province forty years previously.

The paper on the Asian-Australasian flyway system by Lane & Parish succinctly summarizes the state of knowledge in the region, and points out that this flyway is probably the most threatened of all the world's migration systems. Asian Wetland Bureau-Indonesia has been instrumental in focussing on our shorebirds and swamp birds, but as Lane & Parish show, in contrast to Africa and even the Americas, the tropical forests of S.E. Asia are a main destination for many terrestrial migrants. Obviously hunting plays a very significant role for some species, and nobody knows the impact of pesticides in cultivated land, but the message remains depressingly familiar: if we can only protect the forests, the birds will largely look after themselves, whether local endemics or global migrants. The Ornithological Society of Indonesia welcomes ICBP in its new initiative to establish a project office in the country, with the objectives of promoting awareness and advising on the conservation of centres of avian diversity, but the protection of our forests is a global issue that reaches far beyond the capability of any individual organization.

The Hong Kong Bird Report 1990. The Hong Kong Birdwatching Society, GPO Box 12460, Hong Kong.

The year 1990 was a successful one for the society, with a total of 324 Category A species (excludes introduced birds), possibly the highest ever, with eight new species. However, the high total was probably the result of very active society members, and "was most definitely not due to habitat improvements". The society's records committee sets rigorous standards (a list is provided of submitted records that were not accepted), and altogether this is a professionally produced report that many would wish to emulate. There is the usual sprinkling of reports from mainland China, although we urge that any report dealing with territory that must be unfamiliar to many readers should be accompanied by a simple text map.

D.A.H.

Also Received

Hornbuckle, J. *Irian Jaya 1991.* (Available at GBP 5.00 from the author at 30, Hartington Road, Sheffield, S7 2LF, UK.)

This trip report contains practical advice and details of species seen in the Snow Mountains, Jayapura region, Merauke region, the Arfak Mountains and Biak, by the author together with Mike Archer and Simon Roddis.

Coulter, M.C., Bryan, A.L. Jr., Young, D.P. Jr., Brouwer, K., Kahl, M.P., King, C.E., Kushlan, J.A., Luthin, C.S. & V. van Wieringen. 1991. *A bibliography of storks, ibises and spoonbills.* Savannah River Ecology Laboratory, Aiken, South Carolina, USA. 191pp.