

Scott, DA. & Poole, C.M. 1989. *A status overview of Asian Wetlands*.

Asian Wetland Bureau, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, Publ. No. 53. 140pp. Available from AWB, Institute of Advanced Studies, University of Malaya, Lembah Pantai, 59100 Kuala Lumpur. (Compiled for AWB and WWF, in collaboration with IUCN, ICBP and IWRB).

Previously in *Kukila* we have reviewed first the Indonesian Wetlands Inventory, and then the Directory of Asian Wetlands, the latter being a massive 1181-page book that gives the description of 947 sites in 24 countries. This present volume analyzes data from the latter directory, drawing up summary tables of gross areas, levels of protection, and type and severity of threat, for the wetlands in each country. This leads to identification of sites (or more usually groups of sites by habitat type) according to various categories of protection and threat (individual sites listed in Appendices I and III), and then to a shortlist of the 93 most seriously threatened wetlands in Asia. These sites range from whole regions (Irrawaddy Delta, 3.5 million ha, the Sunderbans, 1 million ha) down to individual lakes of a few hundred hectares or less, and indeed a fish pond of one hectare in Java (a breeding colony),

There then follows country summaries, describing the status of protection, priority sites (44 in Indonesia) and activities, and finally, before the various appendices, an annotated list of threatened species. Indonesia is seen to have major responsibility for three mammals, eleven birds, and perhaps ten reptiles.

Among the eleven birds, readers of *Kukila* will recognize the Spot-billed Pelican, Milky Stork, Storm's Stork, Lesser Adjutant, White-shouldered Ibis, White-winged Wood-Duck and Asiatic Dowitcher. This reviewer was not previously aware that no breeding population of Spot-billed Pelican is known outside southern India and Sri Lanka, except for the "less than ten individuals in the Banyuasin Musi Delta", but in fact no breeding site has yet been proven there. Reference to a report of a Japanese Night-Heron at Morowali (Sulawesi) illustrates the extent to which a published but unsubstantiated record continues to be quoted again and again. For completeness, the other four species are Invisible Rail (a Halmahera endemic), Javanese Wattled Lapwing (probably extinct), Javan Coucal and Javan White-eye.

Among the 93 most seriously threatened wetlands in Asia, eight are listed from Indonesia (one in Sumatra, three in Java, two in Kalimantan, and one each in Seram and Irian Jaya). Such a selection must inevitably be rather subjective, although presumably Asian Wetland Bureau - Indonesia paid cognizance to the enormous gaps in knowledge (the identification of which is one of the objectives of the national inventory) in evaluating these eight sites. It might be questioned why the wetland portions of Manusela National Park (Seram) are included here, as they are small in area, not yet well described, and one would have thought much less threatened than, say, the Mahakam Lakes of East Kalimantan, or Rawa Aopa or the Lariang Plains in Sulawesi.

This subjectiveness highlights perhaps the one main criticism of the work. An enormous effort has gone into the compilation of the wetland inventories, both nationally and internationally, and a lot of it voluntary. It is natural that the organizers wish to optimize on this mass of material, and the momentum that has been achieved. It must be remembered, however, that the present work is extrapolated from an original data base in which gaps in knowledge are implicit. This status overview will now be utilized by national and international planning and funding agencies, and the assumption might be made that it is definitive. In fact, as surveys continue and the data base grows, the identification of priorities will become more objective. Without discrediting the value of the Status Overview, any individual, whether ornithologist seeking to do a survey, or representative of a major funding agency preparing a management and conservation plan, would still be advised to study the relevant national inventory, and to co-ordinate with the body responsible for updating it, in this case Asian Wetland Bureau - Indonesia.

D.A.H.

Mason, V. and F. Jarvis. 1989. *Birds of Bali*. Berkeley and Singapore: Periplus Editions. 80pp. incl. numerous col. Plates.

The early collectors were not very interested in Bali. It lacks the richness of Java and does not have the Wallacean element found on Lombok. Consequently, its birds have received little attention until recently. However, Bali is a great island for the visiting birdwatcher. It has the best tourist infrastructure in Indonesia and is still twenty-nine percent under primary forest. Good birdwatching spots are easily accessible and armed with this book the visitor, and more importantly the local people, will come to celebrate the fauna as much as the island's cultural heritage.

The six page Preface includes some useful hints on where to go birdwatching, though unfortunately there is no map. The bulk of the text is dedicated to 122 of the island's c.300 recorded species. The species are not dealt with in systematic order, rather in the order that a visitor might encounter them. The author's enthusiasm for the birds of Bali surfaces often, usually as an engaging anecdote but occasionally in couplets taken from Byron and Wordsworth. Fortunately, the narrative is not just purple: it includes careful notes on the behaviour and habitat of some species and there is much here to inform the student.

The amount of text afforded each species varies from a few lines to a page, but all endemic forms are given some space, and each species is illustrated in watercolour. The matt reproduction is pleasing and the birds, set against a natural (and often typically Balinese) background, are well caught and accurately portrayed.

The book ends with a checklist of Balinese birds (and a list of species that have been tentatively recorded). It is a pity the list is not referenced, as it is the first published checklist of the birds of Bali. However, it is coded for habitat, status, abundance and, quite useful for the visitor, best spot for

viewing.

This is a delightful book on the birds of a delightful island. It adds to the expanding literature of the Java-Ball region (see Reviews *Kukila* 4:157) and will encourage the conservation of Indonesia's extraordinary avifauna. It might prove too late for the island's one endemic, the Bali Starling *Leucopsar rothschildi*, but accessible works like this are the fauna's best chance.

PA.

Howes, J. & D. Bakewell. 1989. *Shorebird Studies Manual*.

AWB Publication No.55, Kuala Lumpur, (soft cover, x + 362 pp, 18 with B & W photos, abundant text illustrations). Price: US\$15 (excluding mail).

The Asian Wetland Bureau has come a long way since it was first established as Interwad-er in Malaysia in 1983, and it is now the leading agency in developing conservation-orientated wetland and shorebird studies in the Asian regions of the Indo-Asian and East Asia/Australasian Flyways (shown on Maps 2 and 3 of the Manual). Within this region, there are estimated to be between 3 and 5 million shorebirds in 84 species. The main threats to these birds lie within their transit and wintering grounds that largely encompass the region covered by this Manual - threats such as habitat damage (for example, it is estimated that 90% of the global population of the Asian Dowitcher winters in SE Sumatra) and hunting (an estimated 1.5 million birds per year).

A number of international conventions have been developed to promote conservation, particularly the species-orientated Bonn Convention and the habitat-orientated Ramsar Convention. At present, only six countries within the region have contracted into the Ramsar Convention (India, Japan, Hong Kong, Pakistan, Nepal and Vietnam), but Thailand, the Philippines and Indonesia are expected to join very soon. In addition, there are independent bilateral Migratory Bird Agreements involving Japan, China and Australia and an important new agreement is now being developed between Japan, Australia and the ASEAN countries which should provide considerable support for studies in Indonesia.

A primary aim of AWB is the promotion of awareness and development of capabilities within the region under its jurisdiction, as an adjunct to its species and habitat management studies, and clearly the time is ripe for the publication of such a manual as this. Shorebird studies, especially in hot tropical regions, present not inconsiderable problems in terms of both sheer discomfort and in the identification of what is generally recognized as a difficult group, and the authors, AWB, and the sponsors (WWF Malaysia and the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service) deserve full credit for the provision of this major encouragement to the Asian research workers who will be increasingly responsible for these activities.

The manual provides a guide to: types of shorebirds ("waders"), bird topography and moult, identification, equipment and methods for surveys and censuses, trapping, banding, morphometry, and feeding ecology studies and measurements of biomass. A chapter by Timothy C. Williams covers the use of radar to track shorebird movements. While some sections are necessarily basic, this is a

comprehensive and consequently moderately advanced guide, but it is written throughout in an easy style that is assisted by copious pen-and-ink sketches by David Bakewell that are a delight to use. While the copies of pages from actual field notebooks may be very realistic, even a native English-speaker may have difficulty in reading them, and one questions whether the little deception of some judicious rewriting might not have been to advantage.

Most chapters have a rather extensive, categorized section on Further Reading, and Appendix 1 lists both the national, regional and world-wide bodies involved in shorebird studies. Appendix 2 is a distributional list of the 84 Asian shorebirds and 17 vagrant species; the tabulated section is in rather small format for use under field conditions, and the listing of the Australian Pratincole as occurring in the region only in Mongolia (as a breeding visitor) suggests that not all typographic errors have been eliminated.

This is a manual that is going to be subjected to extreme field conditions (well depicted in some of the photographs). Obviously considerations of cost had to be balanced against decisions on paper-weight etc, but some form of stout, weather (and mud) proof cover will be required. More contentious is the question of language, as there will be many students in some of the principal countries of the region who have not (yet) acquired sufficient familiarity with English to benefit from the Manual. There would be obvious advantages, for example, in an Indonesian translation, but costs could be prohibitive.

D.A.H.

Eve, R. & Guigue, A.M. 1989. *Survey of the Mahakam River Delta, East Kalimantan - with special reference to its waterbirds.*

Asian Wetland Bureau publication no. 45, Kuala Lumpur. 34 pp.
(Available from: AWB, P.O.Box 254/BOO, Bogor 16001, Indonesia, or: AWB, Institute of Advanced Studies, University of Malaya, 59100 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia).

This report is the result of two visits in 1987, over 15 days in May-June and 12 days in November, and is the first report on the birds of this dynamic, 5000 sq. km. delta. The list of 146 species includes 2 new species for Borneo, Pacific Black Duck and Grey Teal, and 22 for Kalimantan. Most of the latter are coastal waders, including Malay Plover, Green Sandpiper and Asian Dowitcher, but the list also includes Chinese Egret, Greater Golden-backed Woodpecker, Red-rumped Swallow and Black-naped Oriole. It is to be hoped that these records will be formally published in *Kukila* in due course. The delta is confirmed as being of only moderate importance to coastal waders, (the highest count being 2263), the suggested reason being that it lies outside the principal wader fly-ways. The only large waterbird recorded was the Lesser Adjutant, with a disappointing maximum count, from aerial survey, of just 29 birds. Surprisingly, only one wintering migrant passerine was seen, a Mugimaki Flycatcher (also new to Kalimantan).

Although the oil industry is very active in the delta, the biggest threat to natural habitats, here as elsewhere on Indonesia's mangrove coasts, is seen to be the rapid and uncontrolled conversion to brackish-water fish ponds. One site is recommended for conservation status.