

figures in the paper discussing the geographical origin of waders, for example, can have four scales, scatterplots of two datasets, two bar graphs, measurements of catching casualties, plus around the outside data on both sexes of the two variables of up to six populations of the species.

The main text is in excellent English with Dutch and French summaries. Various black and white photographs are dotted through the book, but the reproduction of these is generally poor. They do convey some impression of a severe habitat foreign to most New Zealanders (the feeding waders with hazy camels walking behind is especially evocative).

Although most of this book covers fields untouched in New Zealand it shows what can be achieved and should encourage similar studies world wide. It is good to see the fusion of pure science with a strong conservation ethic working to document and protect one of the world's coastal treasures.

Overall, this book provides access to part of the leading edge of shorebird ecology studies and should be of much use at universities, both at undergraduate and postgraduate level. It may well prove to be one of the most important publications on wader biology in recent years. It is essential reading for anyone contemplating shorebird studies. For an example of how shorebird ecology studies can and should be done, go no further than *Homeward Bound*.

Philip Battley



*The Petrels – Their Ecology and Breeding Systems*, by John Warham. 1990. Academic Press, London. Hardback. 452pp., 29 b/w illustrations, 18 tables and numerous figures. UK price £28.

This encyclopedic work on petrels (albatrosses, fulmars, petrels, shearwaters, storm petrels and diving petrels), with 40 pages of references, will prove of great worth to all students of petrel biology. Warham has been a prolific writer on petrels since the early 1950s, with numerous scientific papers and several books to his name.

Some new facts have come to light since its publication, such as the increasing number of Black-winged Petrel breeding colonies and sexual dimorphism in Fairy Prion size. Wandering Albatross populations are thought to be declining because of drownings on hooked longlines, not because of “fishing nets”; contrary to Table 4.2, *Pterodroma externa* and *P. neglecta* don't give a *ti-ti* call but *P. axillaris* does (pers. obs.); Cook's Petrels are likely to have their current breeding distribution because they have been wiped out by predators on mainland New Zealand, rather than because of “sea-level changes” and “vulcanism”; and Kermadec Petrels were most likely eliminated by cats and Norway rats from Raoul Island, rather than by European settlers – although human harvest no doubt hastened the decline of the species.

However, these minor matters do not affect the overall accuracy and detail presented throughout the book.

This volume covers the different petrel groups, genus by genus, and their comparative breeding biologies. A second volume in preparation will expand on aspects of behaviour, energetics, physiology, food, distribution, and conservation.

This book will prove of particular worth to New Zealanders, as about 65 of the world's 110 or so petrels breed or occur in this country.

The petrels are an important, but often forgotten, part of marine communities. With more pressure on marine resources from human exploitation, research on seabirds will become increasingly important.

Alan Tennyson



*Current Ornithology, Volume 8*, edited by Dennis M. Power 1991. Plenum Press, New York. xvi + 335pp. (hardback), ISBN: 0-306-43640-X.

*Current Ornithology* is an annual review journal masquerading as a book. So why should the myth be perpetuated by reviewing it as a book? For any volume in this series the straight answer is that it contains excellent papers about which ornithologists should be aware. For Volume 8 there is the added bonus of a South Pacific flavour with strong New Zealand accents inspired by the Twentieth International Ornithological Congress held in Christchurch in 1990.

The first paper in this volume is an overview of ornithology in New Zealand by Allan Baker, a New Zealander now working in Canada. In 67 pages Baker covers a huge territory: the birds of New Zealand and where they came from, geographic variation, conservation, and the status of ornithological research. Baker performs the neat trick of combining this breadth with numerous specific examples that go into satisfying detail. For example, the discussion of geographic variation presents good reviews of work on Tomtits, New Zealand Robins, Bellbirds, Variable Oystercatchers and Red-billed Gulls.

Baker's paper is also interesting because he occasionally takes the opportunity to pass comment on the direction of both research and conservation initiatives in New Zealand. His plea for a greater emphasis on conservation genetics is well argued in the New Zealand context. However, in other parts of the paper there are throw-away lines that deserve greater attention. Baker puts in plugs both for the use of islands in species rescue programmes and for the ultimate objective of establishing large mainland reserves. However, there is no discussion of conservation priorities and the inevitable trade-offs in choosing strategies. He applauds the many long-term studies from Richdale's population study of Yellow-eyed Penguins to Mills's continuing study of Red-billed Gulls. However, the present environment for research funding focuses on the bottom line and often demands the promise of a return in three years. It would be interesting to have an impassioned justification for the continuation of long-term research. Finally, Baker decries the general shortage of funds for avian research in New