

*The Migration Of Knot*, edited by Theunis Piersma & Nick Davidson. Wader Study Group Bulletin 64, Supplement, April 1992. Available from Wader Study Group, P.O. Box 247, Tring, Herts, HP23 5SN, UK. ISSN0260-3799 Prize £15 includes P&P.

Few people fail to be moved by stories of bird migration, and so this book will interest many people. It is a collection of papers originating largely from the workshop on "Recent advances in understanding Knot migrations" held in Ribe, Denmark, in September 1989. With so many books covering migration in general it is of great interest to have a book devoted to just one species. Knots are migrants that capture the imagination, travelling as they do from their breeding grounds in the very high Arctic to the southernmost points in Africa, South America and Australasia.

The book is divided into five sections. The first covers "Origins and distributions of sub-species" and consists of four papers dealing with the more serious side of Knot. The second section contains four papers entitled "Migration systems review". Each paper deals with one of the four main subspecies and is in effect a summary of various works. These papers are very readable and full of questions still to be answered. Of particular interest to Australasian readers is Mark Barter's paper on the subspecies *rogersi*, which occurs in this region. The third and fourth sections have 18 papers on "*islandica* Knots in spring and summer" and "Autumn and winter in Europe and Africa." Probably of more interest to the serious "student" of migration, they nevertheless contain some very interesting information. The final two papers look at the migration strategies of all subspecies on a global basis and conservation strategies which need to be worked out in order to protect the Knot which spans such a vast part of the world and yet is very localised throughout its range.

This is a very interesting collection of generally easy-to-read papers which give us a fascinating up-to-date look at the migratory world of the Knot.

Adrian Reigen



*Handbook of the Birds of the World*, Vol.1. Ostrich to Ducks, edited by del Hoyo, J., Elliott, A., and Sargatal, J. Lynx Editions, Barcelona 1992, 696 pp., £95.

To produce a book of such magnitude seems a daunting task. However, the first volume has been delivered and the standard set is very high. Naturally with such wide scope it is not going to have the detail one would expect from a regional handbook, but this book has not been designed to compete with them. It slots in between these and field guides, but it does set out to cover all the species of birds in one work.

It does not claim to be a detailed specialist book providing all the answers to physiology, behaviour, distribution and identification. It does, however, provide the answers to many of the questions that the average amateur (and even professional) ornithologist would like to know. How many species in a particular genus? Just how does this aspect of a bird's physiology function? It provides a valuable and comprehensive resource which the reader will go back to time and time again to find needed pieces of information.

Volume 1 provides an introduction to the class Aves with a wide-ranging section on various aspects: classification, physiology, biology, behaviour, relationship to man, conservation status etc., which sets the pattern for the treatment of the orders and families which follow. The first volume has much of interest for the New Zealand reader as it covers many of the orders and families familiar to us. Later volumes are not likely to have the same direct interest, apart from the one dealing with Charadriiformes.

The classification used is the traditional one, not the new Sibley and Monroe system based on DNA, and many will be happier with this approach. It does, however, provide a comparative table so that the two systems can be cross referenced. The authors have gathered a tremendous wealth of data together and this is reflected in the list of references (over 6000). One may criticise the lack of Southern Hemisphere advisers but perhaps these were not needed in view of the number of regional handbooks currently in production which have already covered in detail the orders and families encompassed by this volume.

As for accuracy, one can judge such a work only by its treatment of the species with which one is familiar. The authors have done very well and have obviously kept as up to date as practicable on new information as it has come to hand. Naturally there are some minor omissions and errors but these are not significant.

Overall the publication is well presented and all species (and most distinctive races) are illustrated as promised. The photographs are well chosen and generally they avoid the stereotype portrait. They are interesting and illustrate behaviour, habitat, etc. The distributional maps are small but adequate. The book is one many would like to own so that they could delve into it regularly. However, some would find the price (£95) rather off-putting, especially when they consider there are a further nine volumes to follow. Those who do acquire it will, I am sure, find it good value.

[Available from Birdlife International, Wellbrook Court, Girton Road, Cambridge, U.K. CB3 0NA]

Brian D. Bell



*Storks, Ibises and Spoonbills of the World*, by James A. Hancock, James A. Kushlan and M. Philip Kahl, 1992. Academic Press, London. 385 pp. £65.00. ISBN 0-12-322730-5.

The combined effort of the very experienced authors, three authorities on the subject, and the skills of the two artists have produced an outstanding reference work on some of the world's largest and most spectacular birds.

The book is in two parts. The first part has chapters on classification, conservation, courtship and reproduction, feeding behaviour and ecology, illustrated with some magnificent photographs.

The main part deals in great detail with all of the species from the five continents, discussing with apparent accuracy all aspects of distribution and population, biology, ecology, breeding, taxonomy and conservation. The writers in their introduction state: "Some species are found in large