

*Birds of New Zealand. Locality Guide*, by Stuart Chambers. 1989. Arun Books, Hamilton. 511pp. Numerous coloured illustrations and locality maps. \$56.60

This is a guide to where to watch birds, with a difference. The bulk of it consists of 2-3 page accounts of over 170 New Zealand birds. You look up the species you want to see and are directed to several suitable localities. The selection of species is wide, from the commonest introduced passerine to the rarest New Zealand endemic. Each account also includes notes on status, habitat and "simplified descriptions" to help with identification. An introduction to New Zealand includes basic tourist information for overseas visitors, and the book ends with a selection of week-long excursions and fuller details of a dozen or so good birding localities.

The approach "via the bird" as Stuart Chambers puts it, will be especially useful to the overseas birder hoping to see New Zealand's special birds, but it does require good cross-referencing to be successful. A more comprehensive index would be helpful as several good birding spots pop up incidentally in the text and could easily be missed. For example, Crested Grebes on Lake Pearson are mentioned only under the Rock Wren entry.

Over 150 localities are covered with an emphasis on the north of the North Island and the south of the South Island, so that some excellent sites, such as Farewell Spit, barely get a mention. But as Stuart Chambers points out, the book is not meant to be "a journey through every corner of New Zealand" and generally the recommended localities will bring the birdwatcher to the bird. . . well, almost. An essential part of a guide to where to watch birds is detailed maps and instructions on how to get to the spot where you finally raise your binoculars. You want to know if you need permission to cross that final paddock, exactly where a bush track begins and where the motel is after you have "dipped out" on a Rock Wren in a southerly storm. All too often the text and maps fail to provide this information. When looking for Westland Black Petrels, for example, we are told to go to "Scotchman's Creek," 4 km south of the Punakaiki River, but neither the creek nor the river are marked on the sketchmap.

In Otago and the West Coast, the areas I am more familiar with, the choice of sites is optimistic at times. You will be extremely lucky to see Pied Shags at Taiaroa Heads or Black-fronted Dotterels at Hooper's Inlet. More consultation with local birdwatchers and checking of facts culled from other publications would have avoided these errors.

Looking through the list of people acknowledged, I suspect that the information from the north and far south of the country will be more accurate.

About one-third of each species account is taken up by "simplified descriptions" to help with identification. These are generally unhelpful and sometimes downright misleading: I have yet to see a Bellbird with a "noticeable white wingbar". Particularly annoying are the photographs of

petrels and shearwaters sitting on the ground, when most observations and identification problems occur at sea. To my mind, nothing beats a good fieldguide illustration for identification purposes and it is a pity that yet another New Zealand publication has tackled this aspect inadequately.

But on a brighter note, the photographs are generally excellent, with Brian Chudleigh's waders and terns some of the best I have seen. The paper, printing and photographic reproduction are good and the binding successfully withstood a month in the back of my car with numerous 11 year old lads and their accessories.

There is a lot of information in this book, but a bit more research, checking and stringent editing would have made it more accessible and accurate. If you are looking for a book to guide you to your local birdwatching areas you may well be disappointed, but if you want an ornithological tour of New Zealand, then this book will guide you to some of the country's best birdwatching localities and direct you to some exciting scenic areas.

Derek Onley



*The Manx Shearwater*, by Michael Brooke. 1990. T. & D. Poyser. Hardback. 246 pp. 64 b/w illustrations, 57 tables. UK price £16.

It is 48 years since Ronald Lockley's classic *Shearwaters* appeared, a book that stimulated the interest of many ornithologists of his and later generations in shearwaters in particular and in tube-noses in general. The present monograph shows how far we have come since 1942. This is a highly readable but scholarly text drawing largely on Brooke's long-term research and so focusing particularly on breeding biology, bringing together his published results in a more digestible form. This aspect takes up about 60% of the text. The rest is devoted to topics like global distribution, migration, population biology and vocalisations. Parallel references to birds other than petrels help in putting the situation with petrels in perspective.

Brooke describes field experiments on orientation to nest sites and has a whole chapter on *puffinosis*, an affliction that kills fledglings and whose main outward manifestation is blistering of the feet. He reveals that the causative agent(s) have yet to be identified, describes his experiments that point to the involvement of mites ('bracken bugs') in transmission, and reveals that a drug used in treating relapsing fever in humans was successful for combating *puffinosis* in small-scale trials.

Highly recommended.

John Warham