

REVIEWS

Bird Conservation: the Science and the Action. By John Coulson, Nicola J. Crockford (Eds.) 1995. *Ibis* vol. 137 Supplement 1, S1-S250. ISSN 0963-0856. £20.00 (pbk)

Within this Society there has frequently been debate on what links can be established between the conservation and the study of birds. This supplement to *Ibis* is the proceedings of a conference held by the British Ornithologists' Union in 1994 to bridge this same gap. The objectives were to develop links between scientists and conservationists and to reach agreement on priorities for action in the future.

The 30 odd contributed papers relate to studies of birds in temperate and arctic regions with a direct conservation application. Some are of a general nature or focus on techniques such as the paper submitted by BTO on a new approach to long term monitoring of breeding bird populations. Other papers establish conservation priorities for endangered birds in NE Asia, the United States, Australia, UK and Europe. Others are more specific. The New Zealand contribution was from Mick Clout and John Craig with a paper that summarised the history of research and conservation action on takahe and kakapo. A fascinating story, well told and deserving a wider audience in New Zealand.

Of particular appeal is a paper by Tom Cade and Stanley Temple in which they evaluate the effectiveness of the 'hands on' approach to the conservation of threatened bird species. This intensive management - artificial nest sites, nest manipulation, captive breeding etc. - has been criticised for being unscientific and a costly diversion from the causal problem. The authors examined the outcome of 30 different 'hands on' projects that had previously been described in the Symposium on Management Techniques for Preserving Endangered Species held at the University of Wisconsin in 1977. A summary is given of each project and an assessment of how successful it has been 16 years later. The Black Robin is the only New Zealand species included and I was a little surprised at the project being classified as an effort in reintroduction whereas I would have attributed it more to nest manipulation. The paper concludes that at least 66% of these projects have promoted species survival through a crisis period; a successful short term solution and vital for long term viability if achieved concurrently with addressing the cause of endangerment.

All papers are very readable and of interest and relevance to those with either a casual or academic link with the subject. The conclusions and recommendations arising from this conference could well influence the course of ornithology in New Zealand to the year 2000 and beyond. The emphasis is clearly placed on the integration of long term monitoring and short term studies based on sound science and ecological intuition which will lead to continually improved conservation action. To achieve this, there must be consultation and planning between ornithological societies, other scientific and conservation organisations as well as local authorities.

Peter Gaze