
BOOK REVIEWS

THE HANDBOOK OF AUSTRALIAN SEA-BIRDS, by D. L. Serventy, *Vincent Serventy*, John Warham, published by A. H. & A. W. Reed, Sydney, 1971; 254 pp., 15 col. plates, 127 b. & w. illustrations (including maps & diagrams). Size 255 x 190 mm. Price: \$8.95.

This is an excellently-conceived first attempt to deal comprehensively with all the sea-birds of Australia. It is crammed with information and embodies many practical features including sketches and photos, to aid identification, explanatory maps of the southern oceans and Australia, hints on ringing, an extensive bibliography not restricted to Australian publications, and a commendable index. There are also very useful maps, inside the front and back covers, showing the location of the major islands and archipelagos around the Australian coastline.

In the introductory sections I-IV there is a general account of the sea-bird fauna, its categories, environment and distribution; also considered are certain biological problems, some aspects of current research, and conservation requirements.

The main body of the work is the systematic account, Section V, which deals with the penguins, petrels, cormorants, gannets, pelican, frigate-birds, tropic-birds, skuas, gulls, terns and noddies. The information is summarised under the following headings: field characteristics, general habits, measurements, weights; status in Australia; migration; display; breeding season, nest, eggs, incubation, nestling; breeding distribution—separately for each State and overseas.

Taxonomic questions have been dealt with rather lightly; treatment is conventional.

It is possible to criticise this work on the grounds that the information presented is not up to the minute. However, it should not be forgotten that at the present time most bird books are out of date as soon as they are published—usually through no fault of the authors.

Some disapproval has also been voiced concerning the use of "the" in the title of the book. Here the authors have probably borrowed an old English advertising 'gimmick' best exemplified by the very familiar phrase "the best car in the world."

The book, printed in Hong Kong to a high standard, can be recommended with confidence to the specialist as well as the general reader.—H.T.C.

ADDITIONAL NOTE:—

The Handbook of AUSTRALIAN SEA-BIRDS (Serventy et alia)—additional nesting sites can be added for South Australia as follows:—

Black-faced Cormorant (page 166)—Rocky Island and White Rock, Port Victoria.

Pied Cormorant (page 169)—Port Price; Bird Island, Wallaroo; Little Goose Island, Port Victoria (a small colony).

Little Pied Cormorant (page 170)—Nesting at marine sites in conjunction with Pied Cormorants at Port Broughton; also Bird Island, Wallaroo.

Caspian Tern (page 209)—Lake Mulgundawa, River Murray; Rocky Island, Port Victoria; Port Price (on saltfields).

Crested Tern (page 219)—Goose Island, Port Victoria; Bird Island, Wallaroo; Stonywell Island, Coorong.

—DAVID CONDON, May, 1972.