

THE WRENS & WARBLERS OF AUSTRALIA The National Photographic Index of Australian Wildlife, Edited by Vincent Serventy, A. R. McGill, John Pringle and T. R. Lindsey. 1982. Australia: Angus & Robertson. Pp. 343, 235 col. photos, 300 by 220 mm. \$50.

This book is the first of a proposed series covering all Australian birds using photographs from the National Photographic Index of Australian Wildlife. The stated aim is to produce a modern day "Gould" by using colour photographs for the "sensual pleasure" of "academics in fields other than ornithology and the well-read layman".

The photographs are among the best available from some of Australia's top bird photographers. All but five of the 84 species are illustrated, eleven with single photographs and the remainder with two to five photographs, many of which are published for the first time. It is pleasing to see, at last, good photographs of little known species such as the Black Grasswren and the Yellow Chat, as well as many good pictures of female fairywrens *Malurus*.

The great majority of photographs have been taken at nests, mostly using artificial light sources. Notable exceptions are the beautiful photographs of the Black Grasswren (p. 92) and *Calamanthus* (p. 116) by Graeme Chapman. Several nice studio shots by A. D. & M. C. Trounson (*i.e.* pp. 148, 174, 202) are a marked improvement on some of their earlier work published elsewhere.

Reproduction of photographs is of excellent quality although cropping has in numerous cases resulted in shortened tails or crowded pictures. This cropping seems hard to justify in a book which strives to emulate Gould and which has numerous blank glossy pages and broad white borders throughout.

There is unnecessary repetition of very similar photographs of the same birds at the same nests for the Striated Grasswren and Slate-backed Thornbill and presumably the same nestling Western Gerygone is needlessly depicted twice on facing pages.

The text draws from published material and the expertise of a team of consultants including ornithologists S. J. J. F. Davies, H. J. de S. Disney, A. R. McGill, S. A. Parker and D. L. Serventy. One cannot help feeling some scepticism about the courageous claim that every item of published material on Australian birds was made available to the author, John Pringle (p. ix). The text contains many quotations, some quite lengthy, from sources such as Gould's *Handbook of the Birds of Australia* and early volumes of *The Emu*.

The "wrens and warblers" of the book comprise those species treated by A. R. McGill in his *Australian Warblers* (1970, Bird Observers Club), that is, the Families Maluridae, Acanthizidae,