

NORTH'S NESTS AND EGGS OF AUSTRALIAN BIRDS. A life history of our birds. A facsimile edition of an Australian classic. Volume I. 1984; pp 366, vii; 7 plates. Oxford University Press. Melbourne. Price \$80.

Volume I of A.J. North's *Nests and Eggs* comprises four parts originally published between 1901 and 1904. The work was completed in 1914 with the publication of the last part of Volume IV. North compiled these monumental books while employed as Assistant in Ornithology at the Australian Museum, Sydney. They were a culmination of his lifelong interest in Australian birds and their nesting habits. However, the title *Nests and Eggs* does not fully represent the scope of the work. Each species-account gives the description, habits, food, distribution and history of discovery of each bird, as well as descriptions of its nest and eggs. In keeping with the format of Gould's *Birds of Australia*, North included numerous comments and quotations from other ornithologists, with whom he corresponded. *Nests and Eggs* is illustrated with adequate drawings of selected birds by Neville H.P. Cayley (father of Neville W. Cayley) and black-and-white photographs, some by the author, of nests and eggs. Photographs illustrating the eggs of each species occur at the end of each part.

In general, the material in *Nests and Eggs* is still valid today. As Walter Boles writes in the Foreword to the facsimile edition, "it has been

supplemented but rarely replaced". Some modern readers may be confused by the taxonomy and nomenclature used by North, for both have changed greatly in the past 80 years. Also, *Nests and Eggs* predated the Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union's first checklist of the birds of Australia, published in 1926. Before this, there was no single, up-to-date list of birds that occurred in Australia, let alone books like those of Pizzey, Slater and Simpson, giving colour pictures of them. We must remember the handicaps that men like North worked under and excuse some of the inaccuracies that occur. Less excusable are the omissions due to North's feud with A.J. Campbell, a contemporary ornithologist associated with the National Museum of Victoria. North simply ignored descriptions of birds, nests and eggs published by Campbell and his associates. Despite these drawbacks, *Nests and Eggs* is still a valuable scientific reference as well as being an important historical source.

Oxford University Press are to be commended on producing this facsimile of Volume I. They plan to publish the entire work, thus making it accessible to a much wider audience. The original *Nests and Eggs* is almost unavailable and, consequently, expensive. I see the facsimile edition appealing to serious students of ornithology, both amateur and professional, those interested in historical zoology, and collectors of books on Australian birds.

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