

Book Reviews

The field guide to the birds of Australia 9th ed.

GRAHAM PIZZEY AND FRANK KNIGHT, EDITED BY SARAH PIZZEY

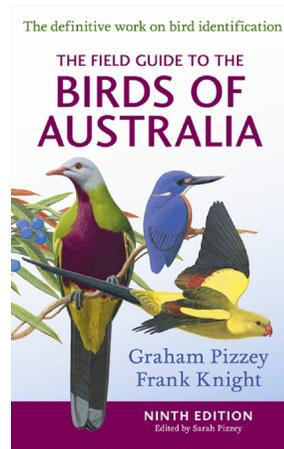
*Harper Collins, 2013. Soft cover, 624 pages.
A\$45.00*

The new ninth edition of *The field guide to the birds of Australia* by Pizzey and Knight is probably best described as exactly like the previous edition - only different. The most notable changes - apart from the purple trim of the cover - are:

- the alterations to the order of the taxonomy;
- the inclusion of endemic island birds such as the Lord Howe Woodhen, Norfolk Island Parakeet and Slender billed White-eye (for instance);
- the lumping of all the vagrant birds at the back of the book,
- new illustrations and species descriptions that reflect the latest splits recognised by IOC.

The new illustrations continue the tradition and high standard set by the previous editions for having the most taxonomically 'correct' bird illustrations of any Australian field guide. Most notably the new Grasswren splits are rendered superbly. It's heart-warming to see South Australia is now the Grasswren capital of the world with seven species possible in the State. The Short-tailed Grasswren, officially our second endemic bird, is emphatically listed, illustrated and described.

Inevitably the guide does not reflect all of the latest splits and lumps put forward by



taxonomical experts, but given the never-ending machinations of genetic scientists, it is a fraught exercise.

The section of 46 pages devoted to vagrants in the back of the book is the only feature of the new edition which I'm not so sure is a good thing. Comparing vagrant birds to the common or endemic birds is so much easier when the illustrations are on the same page. Nevertheless Pizzey and Knight's offering remains the pick of the Australian field guides in my view and anyone looking to purchase a new guide would be well served by this latest edition.

David Kowalick
david.kowalick@fishgate.org.au