

Australian bird names: a complete guide

IAN FRASER AND JEANNIE GRAY

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Paperback, 352 pages, black and white illustrations

Gerygone, Cisticola ... how should these names be pronounced? What do they mean? Where do they come from? All these questions and many more can be answered with *Australian Bird Names*, a fascinating book for anyone with an interest in words about birds.

The authors, accomplished natural history writer, Ian Fraser, and language enthusiast, Jeannie Gray, have clearly enjoyed the task of researching and writing about the scientific and common names of all Australian birds, as this comes through in the engaging and often humorous text.

Browsing through even a small number of entries quickly makes clear the extent of scholarship and research that has gone into producing this book. For many species, original descriptions have been sourced and translated anew. However, the authors make it clear when they could find no definitive information about a particular name.

The book's arrangement follows Christidis and Boles (2008) and includes those additional species accepted by the Birds Australia Rarities Committee up to March 2012. Translations and derivations are given for family, genus, specific and common names, including the many and varied versions that have been in use in earlier times. For each species, status (resident/migrant/vagrant/breeding) is given. All scientific names are followed with a pronunciation guide. There is a comprehensive list of references, together with indexes of common and scientific names, at the end of the book.



The eminently readable introduction covers the significant influences on the common names of Australian birds and gives short histories of some of the more important figures and groups in Australian ornithology. There is also an explanation of how the pronunciation guides were derived and the principles used.

While this could be a dry and humourless topic, the authors' easy style and inclusion of many intriguing and sometimes funny notes about the ins and outs of the early bird collectors and namers make the book a very enjoyable one, as well as being authoritative.

Recommended for your bookshelf.

REFERENCE

Christidis, L. and Boles, W. E. 2008. Systematics and Taxonomy of Australian Birds, CSIRO Publishing, Collingwood, Victoria.

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