

Book Review

Australasian eagles and eagle-like birds

STEPHEN DEBUS, 2017

CSIRO Publishing, Clayton South. \$49.95
Paperback, 167 pages

The author, Stephen Debus, is a key figure in the community of raptor research, with many papers and a number of books to his name.

Eagles are, for various reasons, particularly fascinating to many of us. They are large, have big to huge territories, ride the thermals and are at the top of the food chain, among other attributes. These characteristics make them visible though uncommon, captivating to watch, and subject to accumulated pollutants and threats from human activity.

Their rarity and distribution has made the study of eagles and other large raptors difficult. Indeed, the author in his Preface states, '... to include Sea-Eagles and Little Eagles I had to conduct the first behavioural studies from nest-building to juvenile independence on these species ... before finally getting a fairly complete picture.' These studies took place from 2006 to 2009.

The book presents a compendium of information on 10 raptor species: White-bellied and Sanford's Sea-Eagles; New Guinea Harpy Eagle; Wedge-tailed, Gurney's, Little and Pygmy Eagles; Black-breasted Buzzard, Square-tailed Kite, and Red Goshawk.

The plan of the book is to update *HANZAB* (Marchant and Higgins 1993) for the Australian



species. Similarly, *HBW* (del Hoyo, Elliott and Sargatal 1994) and *Raptors of the World* (Ferguson-Lees and Christie 2001) are the basis for updating the other species.

The book is not meant as a complete compendium of the species treated, rather it is intended to be consulted in conjunction with the earlier works. On that basis, material is arranged under similar headings and presented in a similar format for ready comparison.

Nevertheless, there is plenty of detail where it exists, so researchers and general readers alike will find much to interest them when they consult this book. The book is also illustrated with many excellent photographs showing the behaviours of these striking birds.

Stephen Debus is to be congratulated on bringing together so much information and presenting it in a very accessible form.

REFERENCES

- del Hoyo, J., Elliott, A. and Sargatal, J. (eds). 1994. *Handbook of the Birds of the World. Volume 2, New World Vultures to Guinea-fowl*. Lynx Edicions, Barcelona.

Ferguson-Lees, J. and Christie, D.A. 2001. *Raptors of the World*. Helm, London.

Marchant, S. and Higgins, P.J. (eds). 1993. *Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds. Volume 2, Raptors to Lapwings*. Oxford University Press, Melbourne.

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