

Book Review

Australian birds of prey in flight: a photographic guide

**RICHARD SEATON, MAT GILFEDDER
AND STEPHEN DEBUS, 2019**

CSIRO Publishing, Clayton South, Vic. \$39.99

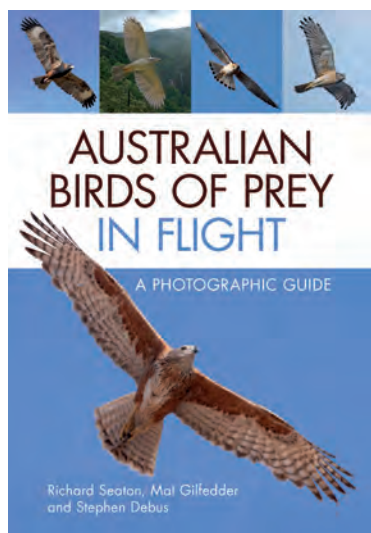
Paperback, 131 pages

Numerous photographs

This compact and profusely illustrated guide is an ideal reference for both professional and enthusiast bird observers who are committed to accurately identifying Australian birds of prey in flight. The ambient light, the environment in which the bird is observed, distance, age of the bird and the time over which the bird is observed can all have an impact on the ability of the observer to correctly identify what they are looking at.

Illustrated with images donated by many leading Australian bird photographers, the book outlines the main distinguishing features of each species and is intended to be used in the field, not left on the bookshelf at home.

Following the title page is a quick reference plate showing all the birds of prey covered in the book with the page number of the species profile section for each species. These species profiles make up the bulk of the book with a four-page entry for each bird of prey. Each of these entries commences with colour images of the species in a range of in-flight orientations overlaid on one of the habitat types in which these birds are expected to be found. At least one of these images will be a relatively close-up photograph



of the bird. The image quality of these close-ups is outstanding.

Each species is then depicted in colour against a blank background from six standardised angles to illustrate the shape, proportions, plumage pattern and colour. Each species profile concludes with a page containing a distribution map, descriptive overview, notes on other species that could be potentially confused with the

subject species followed by notes on several key identification points.

The final section of the book shows images of multiple species alongside each other, to enable easy cross-referencing of their key features. Because colour is often hard to distinguish when birds are seen at a distance, these images are reproduced in black and white to focus the observer on the finer points of identification. Key features that distinguish the species from each other are annotated.

This book is intended to complement *Birds of Prey of Australia: A Field Guide* (Debus 2019, CSIRO Publishing) (See following review. Ed.). It does not provide detailed information on species biology, plumage or identification points for perched birds, but only information on how to identify Australia's birds of prey when they are in-flight.

The authors are extremely well qualified to produce a guide book of this nature. This guide will provide a useful reference for identifying soaring birds in the field and for identifying raptors from one's own photographic images.

Jeff Groves



Quick reference plate