This book is a thorough and up-to-date summary of the avifauna of the Isles of Scilly, one of the most important sites in the Western Palearctic for vagrant species, and one of those most frequently visited by birders, especially in October when well over 1,000 make the annual pilgrimage. The islands are also nationally important for their breeding birds, with some species, for example Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*, breeding in far greater densities than on the mainland. Some seabirds, notably Roseate Tern *Sterna dougallii* and Puffin *Fratercula arctica*, have undergone dramatic declines, however, and the former has not nested successfully in the last ten years. Scilly is outstandingly beautiful, and it is a pity that this is not reflected in the paintings on the book’s dust jacket. The picture of a group of typical autumn migrants to Scilly on the rear cover could be anywhere: it certainly isn’t Scilly.

Introductory sections cover climate, vegetation, general ecology and land use, and provide a brief history of both birding and conservation on Scilly. The species accounts cover all the birds to have occurred on Scilly, some 426 species, in exhaustive detail. For the rarities, a complete breakdown of all records is included, together with clear and useful graphs to depict arrival dates in many cases. Each species has an introductory caption summarising its status – whether it is a breeding bird or regular/scare/rare migrant – while species that require a description by the Scilly Records Panel or BBRC are flagged. There are bar charts and graphs for many species, together with a selection of photographs illustrating both breeding birds and vagrants, plus a few landscapes and seascapes, although several of these have already appeared in other publications.

The writing style is at times rather old-fashioned. For example, under Pechora Pipit *Anthus gustavi* we read that ‘the Tresco individual was not captured and was not seen to be carrying a ring’; and such sentiments also probably reflect the author’s interest in ringing. In some cases, statements about certain records still under consideration are little more than speculation. For example, under ‘Wilson’s Snipe’ *Gallinago gallinago delicata*, two records still under review by BBRC and BOURC are listed, one for 1997 (which should in fact be 1987) and the other for 1998, the statement that both seem ‘likely to gain acceptance… based partly on clear differences in drumming between this species and [Common] Snipe’ may be a little premature.

Similar anomalies occur elsewhere. Under Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*, the text states that ‘a first-winter bird on St Agnes from 22nd October 1982 until 7th June 1983 was confirmed as hudsonius’. This is not the case, and it is to be regretted that the author has taken such a viewpoint. Perhaps, given the sheer wealth of information, it is inevitable that some accepted records are missing; for example, a Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis* on St Agnes and St Mary’s in mid April 2001 is excluded. Other mistakes are not infrequent: the 1981 St Agnes Magnolia Warbler *Dendroica magnolia* was a first-winter, not an adult male; and the 1995 Samson Arctic Redpoll *Carduelis hornemanni* was probably of the race *exilipes* and not nominate *hornemanni*. Such discrepancies as these can only serve to undermine the authenticity of other records in the book. Personally, I feel that only records which have been approved by the appropriate records committee should be included in such a work, and it seems bizarre to me that a claim of Pallas’s Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella certhiola* on St Agnes in 1961 (not accepted) receives greater coverage than the only accepted record of Lanceolated Warbler *L. lanceolata* for Scilly, on Annet in September 2002.

Most Scilly regulars will probably buy this book, even though, at £45.00, it is not cheap. While it may seem churlish to criticise, one is left with the impression that with a little fine-tuning, the ultimate Isles of Scilly avifauna could have been produced.

Doug Page
Computerisation has made the analysis of national ringing datasets feasible, and the arrival of a new millennium has probably given the impetus to realise the possibilities. The first volume of the Norwegian Bird Ringing Atlas (covering divers to auks, in Vouos order) joins the BTO’s Migration Atlas and the Swedish Bird Ringing Atlas in documenting the results from national bird-ringing schemes. Although the book is in Norwegian, all the introductory sections have versions in English, each species account has an English summary, and all the maps, diagrams and tables are annotated in English as well as Norwegian. As a result, a great deal of the information presented is readily accessible to English-speaking readers and, since the species accounts have a standardised layout, it is possible to glean some of the additional information with a bit of patience, even with no knowledge of Norwegian.

The book is extremely well produced and the species vignettes by Eugeny Koblik are particularly attractive.

The introductory sections include details of the history of ringing in Norway, a brief outline of bird migration in general terms, and a description of the material utilised and analyses undertaken. To the end of 1999, nearly five million birds had been ringed and the database used contained nearly 98,000 ‘recoveries’, though a proportion of these were ‘retraps’ (birds recaptured at the same site) and a total of nearly 63,000 recoveries were used to produce the species accounts.

Each species for which there is at least one recovery has its own species account, and these take up the bulk of the book. The accounts range from a single page for species with only one or two recoveries, to five or more pages where sufficient data exist to produce a series of maps relating to different age classes and seasons. In addition to the recovery maps, each account includes maps showing the breeding distribution and the ringing sites for recoveries (including Svalbard where appropriate). Figures show the numbers of birds ringed in five-year periods (apart from the earliest period, from 1914 to 1945), the relative importance of different causes of death for those birds found dead, and the age distribution of recoveries of birds ringed as nestlings or juveniles. A summary box gives the total numbers ringed and recovered, together with the mean/maximum distance travelled and time elapsed from ringing. The maps themselves show movements from the place of ringing and are colour-coded for season of finding. For some species, a map shows monthly mean positions for all recoveries. I was not entirely convinced of their usefulness and found it strange that, for example, Northern Lapwing Vanellus vanellus had two such maps while Oystercatcher Haematopus ostralegus had none. It was, however, a pity that details of birds found in Norway which had been ringed elsewhere were not included.

I found this book a fascinating companion to the Migration Atlas as one can now find out, for example, where those Norwegian Oystercatchers which do not winter in Britain go. There are recoveries down the western coast of Europe as far as Portugal, but particularly in the Wadden; indeed, most Norwegian Oystercatchers are now thought to winter in the Dutch/German Wadden and in eastern England. In contrast, there is only one Norwegian Merlin Falco columbarius recovery in Britain (and the Migration Atlas speculates that this might have been a Shetland bird reorienting back to Britain). All other foreign-ringed Merlins found in Britain have come from Iceland. Most Norwegian Merlins migrate to southwest Europe, though a few from northern Norway migrate to central Europe and as far south as Italy. Only a very small proportion of Norwegian-ringed raptors reach Britain: clearly they do not like crossing the North Sea. Given that Norway is probably the source of many autumn migrants in northern Britain, I am now looking forward to Volume 2 to see how the passerine results compare with the British picture.

The book can be ordered from the publisher through Norsk Naturbokhandel for the price given above plus freight costs; e-mail naturbok@online.no.

Tony Mainwood
to make do with a guide more than half a century old, written by the man who gave his name to the world’s most famous spy: James Bond. Not surprisingly, the new volume was hailed as a major improvement, with really excellent illustrations and text. As with many comprehensive new guides, however, the main problem was size and weight: at more than 1 kg it was far too bulky to carry around in a pocket, and difficult to consult quickly and easily in the field. Nevertheless, I found it invaluable when I visited Jamaica in search of the island’s 28 endemics, lugging it around everywhere I went. It helped me pin down all the target species but one: the elusive Crested Quail-Dove *Geotrygon versicolor*.

So how does this slimline edition compare? Well, at less than a third of the weight, it is certainly light enough to carry in a jacket pocket, and having the species descriptions opposite the plates does, as always, make for ease of use. Using a clever design, the editors have retained virtually all the illustrations, and have made the maps much clearer by incorporating colour. In the case of the region’s many endemics – the species of most interest to visiting birders – the text indicates where the species may be found. To save space, the detailed and comprehensive original text has been pared down to around 50-100 words for most species, and, except in a few cases, this is more than enough to identify the bird in the field. Where a species is well covered by another guide, or familiar to most birders – for example the New World warblers (Parulidae) – the text is even more minimal.

Overall, this is an excellent ‘field guide’ version, though I would have liked the introduction to have carried more information about the conservation of each island’s birds, as in the original. And I would still recommend the larger volume, although you may prefer to leave it on your bookshelf at home for reference, and pack this one in your suitcase!

*Stephen Moss*

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**FIELD GUIDE TO THE BIRDS OF CHILE: INCLUDING THE ANTARCTIC PENINSULA, THE FALKLAND ISLANDS AND SOUTH GEORGIA**


I possess more field guides to the birds of Chile than to any other South American country. This is hardly surprising, as it is the only country on the ‘Bird Continent’ with a manageable avifauna, but is yet another one really merited?

Pocket-sized with no space wasted, the succinct text is packed with all the essential information required to identify any of Chile’s birds. Even those tricky cinclodes *Cinclodes*, canasteros *Athenes*, ground tyrants *Muscisaxicola* and yellow finches *Sicalis* should not now present any problems. Usually only four to six species are covered on a page (sometimes fewer, rarely seven), with the illustrations on a facing plate. Thus all species are well covered without the book ever seeming to be crowded. Similar and confusing species are shown together, even if this involves a little manipulation of the taxonomic order, making the whole approach very user-friendly.

The maps, while accurate, are depicted in an inelegant manner. The justification for splitting the country into three sections is made in the introduction, but I cannot believe it was really necessary. For many species, the text is long enough to incorporate a single map. As more than one scale is already used, this could also have helped to resolve this problem. The information imparted by the maps might also have been better considered; for example, what is really gained by depicting the sea as pink in the case of Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea*?

The illustrations are very good throughout. Again helped by not being crammed onto the plates, they manage to depict, where necessary, all major variations in plumage, be they of age, sex or race. In most cases, these alone should enable the observer to arrive at the correct identification, no mean feat in itself. My only concern is that the coloured backgrounds used in a few of the plates do not work. The woodpeckers (Picidae) and kingfishers (Alcedinidae) appear as if seen at dusk (not in the bright light I associate with days in Chile) and the ground doves *Columbina* disappear into the paper. It is also hard to see where the Black-throated Huett-huett *Pteroptochos tarnii* starts and ends.

This book also includes the Antarctic Peninsula, the Falkland Islands and South Georgia: ‘Chile is the starting point for many Antarctic cruises, making it seem logical to include these areas in the book’. With probably more bird-watchers visiting the country en route to Antarctica than just to the country itself, a commercial justification to include these areas is not shameful. What is shameful, having included these areas, is to treat them rather glibly. What is the status of Black-necked Swan *Cygnus melancoryphus* or Correndera Pipit *Anthus correndera* in the Falkland Islands? Both are common residents but no mention of that can be found in this book. While birds endemic to the Falkland Islands or South Georgia are treated reasonably, those occurring both in Chile and on these islands should have been dealt with more carefully. Furthermore, when bobbing about on a boat off Cape
Horn, I would be less than thrilled to find that the prions I am attempting to identify are separated by 176 pages. Compared with the rest of the book, these areas appear to have been covered in a rather last-minute manner.

Looking now at some of the other field guides to Chile, there was definitely a need for a good guide with a modern approach. The general excellence of this book does indeed merit yet another, and it will be indispensable to anyone fortunate enough to visit this fascinating and scenically stunning country.

Richard Schofield

Reviews

WILDLIFE WALKS: GREAT DAYS OUT AT OVER 500 OF THE UK'S TOP NATURE RESERVES

Being a fan of The Wildlife Trusts, I was pleased to be asked to review this book. Sadly, as I journeyed through it, I became disappointed. Taking the title first, I hope I am not being pedantic, but no walks are actually shown. What you have is information on visiting 200 Wildlife Trust sites, including maps for 112 sites, and a few lines of text for 300 more. Other organisations’ reserves are not mentioned, so the subtitle is also misleading. The maps could have been better, since no scale or orientation is given and they are often hard to differentiate roads from footpaths. The little wildlife vignettes which clutter the maps are poor.

To illustrate how inaccurate some information can be, I take two examples of places I know well: Grafham Water, in Cambridgeshire, and Cley, in Norfolk. For Grafham, the book says that leaflets are available from the ‘fishing lodge and information centre’, yet neither is shown on the map. For a 30-minute visit, a walk to Dudney Hide is suggested, but this is not marked, nor could you do it in such a short time unless you ran. There is no mention that the car parks are fee-paying; Gadwall Anas strepera and Shoveler A. clypeata are given as examples of diving ducks, and one of the illustrations is of a summer-plumage Red-throated Diver Gavia stellata nesting in the reeds at the reservoir’s edge.

On the Cley map, only one car park is shown, the beach hide is missing and a footpath is misplaced. More seriously, the scrapes and pools for which the reserve is famous are not shown. The text states that Cley supports a substantial proportion of the UK’s Eurasian Bittern Botaurus stellaris population, yet only occasionally does a pair breed or attempt to do so.

On the plus side, the book is well laid out. The text for the main sites is clear and presented under a variety of subheadings, for example what it’s best for, opening times, facilities, parking and local attractions.

I suggest you look at a copy before you buy it and, ideally, compare it with the other local and national site guides which are available.

Richard Porter

The BTO’s Garden BirdWatch scheme was started in 1995, and this book presents the results of the survey, as well as inviting readers to join, and collect and submit their own observations. This book is well written and attractively designed, printed and illustrated; it has a foreword by the Chairman of CJ WildBird Foods, who maintains that we can help no fewer than 80 bird species by intelligent feeding through the year. With increasing urbanisation and habitat loss, it is clear that gardens are very important in enabling birds to survive the winter and to be sufficiently well-nourished to migrate, or breed, the following spring. Of course, CJ WildBird Foods supplies bird feed, so it is understandable that the company has supported the BTO in publishing this book, as well as helping to maintain Garden BirdWatch.

It is pointed out that research has shown Goldfinches Carduelis carduelis and Yellowhammers Emberiza citrinella made good use of garden feeding when farmland populations had declined. Garden feeding must play its part in maintaining biodiversity, although it must be remembered that many birds have specialised habitat and feeding requirements. Even so, I have known both European Nightjars Caprimulgus europaeus and Woodcocks Scolopax rusticola to surprise gardeners by their visits!

I found helpful sections on wildlife-friendly gardening, insect-attracting plants, pond-making, bird foods, feeding methods and hygiene (so often neglected). Under garden bird ecology, topics include the function of song, preening and migration, and little-known and up-to-date facts are often given. The book contains over 50 accounts of garden-associated bird species, each with a surprising amount of information. Each species has a colour photograph; these are of variable quality, although a few are excellent.

Will the book succeed in

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encouraging those with access to a garden to feed and document birds throughout the year? Yes, I think it will. Readers will certainly enjoy Mike Toms’ concise and relevant prose, and most will surely be delighted that the book is dedicated to the memory of the late

Chris Mead.

*philip radford*

**Reviews**

**OF PARTRIDGES AND PEACOCKS: AND OF THINGS ABOUT WHICH I KNEW NOTHING**

In the mid twentieth century, C. P. Snow had great success with a series of novels which described the emergence in Britain of two nations: ordinary folk, who can say much good work in their time, and tell interesting stories. They also shed important light on the development of Nicholsonian nature conservation. At the present time, both its official and voluntary clones tend to be seen from below as ignorant control freaks, while they in their turn tend to look down on their critics (including large landowners) as obstructive peasants. Thus, for example, when animal liberators burnt down David Jenkins’ research station some time after he left it, destroying important records of woodland birds as well as data on gamebirds, then came knocking to ensure he had noticed, he dismisses them as ‘silly’ instead of recognising important social critics who now also keep many other research centres in a permanent state of siege. Why did they choose to inflict several million pounds’ worth of damage: was it because wild animals were kept in captivity, or sometimes collected or marked, or was it considered that the station supported ‘field sports’? It is time that our two nations learnt to understand each other better, and got together again.

*bill bourne*

**PENGUINS AND MANDARINS: MEMORIES OF NATURAL AND UNNATURAL HISTORY**

In the mid twentieth century, C. P. Snow had great success with a series of novels which described the emergence in Britain of two nations: ordinary folk, who can say much good work in their time, and tell interesting stories. They also shed important light on the development of Nicholsonian nature conservation. At the present time, both its official and voluntary clones tend to be seen from below as ignorant control freaks, while they in their turn tend to look down on their critics (including large landowners) as obstructive peasants. Thus, for example, when animal liberators burnt down David Jenkins’ research station some time after he left it, destroying important records of woodland birds as well as data on gamebirds, then came knocking to ensure he had noticed, he dismisses them as ‘silly’ instead of recognising important social critics who now also keep many other research centres in a permanent state of siege. Why did they choose to inflict several million pounds’ worth of damage: was it because wild animals were kept in captivity, or sometimes collected or marked, or was it considered that the station supported ‘field sports’? It is time that our two nations learnt to understand each other better, and got together again.

*bill bourne*
The publication of the two BTO breeding atlases inspired many counties and regions to survey their own areas and produce local atlases, usually based on the tetrad as the recording unit. Nonetheless, this new atlas covering the Scottish county of Fife is notable as there has been only one previous year-round atlas, that covering North-east Scotland and published in 1990. Accordingly, all birders interested in distribution and status will want to see this book. At £25.00 for a 364-page, A4-sized hardback book it is certainly excellent value.

Fife is a small county on the east coast of Scotland (just 386 tetrads), and most of the area lies below 200 m. The Fife Bird Atlas covers the period 1991-99, a rather long survey period for such a small county. In these nine years, 119 breeding species were found. The avifauna during this period totals 279 but 66 of these species were recorded fewer than ten times during the survey period and are not considered further. There are few breeding specialities but the East Neuk of Fife is confirmed as being an important area for Corn Bunting Emberiza calandra (76 tetrads and at least 100 pairs in 2000). The most widespread species is the Blackbird Turdus merula and, at 60,000 pairs, this is also reckoned to be the most numerous. The long coastline, including Fife Ness and the Isle of May, which are renowned for their migrant interest, contributes to the wide range of non-breeding species. There are 2,000 pairs of breeding Common Eiders Somateria mollissima with 15,000 wintering, and other regular seaduck include 3,500 Common Scoters Melanitta nigra, 1,000 Velvet Scoters M. fusca and up to six Surf Scoters M. perspicillata.

The breeding survey was tetrad-based and so is comparable with other similar projects. The year-round survey, however, used 5-km squares as the recording unit, which is a compromise between the finer detail of the tetrad and the coarser 10-km unit, and was presumably chosen to simplify fieldwork effort. I would have preferred to see tetrads used throughout, to allow more direct comparisons and provide finer detail in the non-breeding season. Nonetheless, it is fascinating to see where species were found outside the breeding season, although the maps do show that many are either ubiquitous or localised in Fife, just as one might expect given habitat requirements.

Introductory chapters cover topics such as habitats, weather and methodology, but also a useful review of passerine migration in east Fife during the survey period. The format of the main part of the book (the species accounts) generally follows the usual style of two pages per breeding species, with illustration and text facing a map, or maps. Non-breeding species are treated differently with usually one full page including one or two maps. Often there are additional maps to illustrate seasonal distributions, adding value. I liked the way the texts appear to follow a simple format where the main points are discussed in the same sequence. This is helpful to the reader and gives the book a consistent feel. The species distributions shown by the maps are also described in the text, something that many atlases fail to do. The relationship between occurrence and habitat is, however, not always apparent, and locations mentioned are given grid references in the appendices only, not in the texts, so that readers less familiar with Fife cannot readily see how they relate to the rest of the map. The maps are plain, with red squares used on the breeding maps and black ones on the all-year or seasonal maps. There is no indication of relief, rivers or towns on the maps, so it is harder for the reader to interpret them fully. The graphs presented mainly show WeBS (Wetland Bird Survey) data or have been taken from other works, and it seems that little statistical interpretation of distribution against habitat criteria has been attempted. An opportunity to analyse a huge database of information has therefore been missed, but perhaps that will be attempted at a future date. For breeding species, tables provide totals of occupied tetrads by category (confirmed, probable or possible), but these have not been summed. These are small points but most should have been easy to include and would have allowed the reader to gain more information from the survey. I found only one error, in Appendix 1, where the total for Long-tailed Duck Clangula hyemalis should refer to winter numbers, not breeding pairs.

The team are to be commended for establishing population estimates for both breeding and winter seasons. These, together with the detailed distributions now available for Fife, are immensely valuable and instructive, and will be warmly welcomed by conservationists and planners working in the area.

Despite the long survey period, publication of the data has been achieved within four years. The resulting book demonstrates how important it is to assemble a committed team of surveyors and writers to see such a project through. It has undoubtedly been worth the wait. I was surprised that the print run is only 500, and I suspect that the Fife Bird Atlas will be a highly sought-after book and will soon sell out. If you find atlases fascinating, I recommend you order a copy immediately.

Mark Holling
Do not be put off by the title. This thoroughly researched summary of the imminent threats facing many of Asia’s birds and their habitats comes in an attractive, digestible and user-friendly format which immediately encourages further investigation. Do that and you will realise what a treasure-trove of facts and information you have discovered. Few will appreciate that 17 Asian species have not been recorded for 25 years or more, and are now presumed extinct. A further 16 species, including Jerdon’s Courser *Rhinoptilus bitorquatus*, the recently rediscovered Chinese Crested Tern *Sterna bernsteini*, Gurney’s Pitta *Pitta gurneyi*, three species of *Gyps* vulture which inhabit the Indian subcontinent, and several island endemics from Indonesia are considered to be critically endangered and facing imminent extinction. But far from being a compendium of hopeless causes, or an epitaph to lost species, this is, first and foremost, a book about ideas. It presents specialists, conservationists and those interested in Asia’s environment with a plethora of issues and concerns facing the most over-populated continent on this planet, and recommendations by which these can be addressed.

Based upon the authoritative *Threatened Birds of Asia: The BirdLife International Red Data Book* (see *Brit. Birds* 96: 267-268), this guide makes use of much of the same data in a concise and accessible format. Unlike that publication, however, here the focus is upon habitats and the threats they face. A total of 33 threatened habitats is discussed in detail. Within each account, a regional map illustrates the areas where substantial or regionally important areas of habitat remain. Each regional map also shows the location of Outstanding Important Bird Areas, while the text and tables summarise the current status of the habitat, and threats facing individual species. Given the nature and magnitude of these threats, it is not surprising that conservation issues and strategic solutions form a major part of each habitat section. It is here that threats are brought into focus and gaps in our knowledge realised. If we are aware of these gaps, even casual observations made during short birding visits to the region can take on particular significance, but only if they reach the public domain.

As threats to the long-term survival of so many of Asia’s birds show few indications of relenting, it becomes increasingly important that those attempting to conserve the region’s biodiversity devise co-ordinated action campaigns that extend beyond national and political boundaries. The long-term effects of unsustainable exploitation are brought together here within a regional context. This highlights the need for co-co-ordinated national and regional policies, as the efforts of some countries could be largely negated if their neighbours adopt conflicting policies. Only by co-ordinating efforts throughout the region can the labours of enlightened governments, NGO’s and conservation charities be used to maximum effect. Conservation measures and the role that conservationists can adopt to influence regional decisions are also proposed. This approach also highlights the compound impact that individual countries may be making upon the long-term survival prospects for threatened species within the region.

This guide has been sensibly priced, making it accessible to most. It is lavishly illustrated throughout with colour photographs of many of Asia’s most threatened, yet alluring, species, making it a valuable resource to anyone with an interest in the region. For those who know the region well, it makes compulsive reading.

*Peter Kennerley*