

film of living birds, her own understanding of avian structure and function – to produce views that would be otherwise impossible. All the illustrations are dynamic, but particularly striking are the figures of birds shown in flight or swimming; for example, a flayed porpoising Gentoo Penguin *Pygoscelis papua* is shown with its reflection to reveal both upper and lower surfaces, or a stripped-down Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo* splaying its flight feathers in a glide. There is also a strong vein of wit running through the illustrations. My personal favourite is the Budgerigar *Melopsittacus undulatus* skeleton contemplating its own reflection in its toy mirror; a sort of kitsch avian version of Vesalius's iconic 'Skeleton contemplating a skull' of 1543. The only real gripe I have is that the illustrations are not shown with any indication of scale. Some seem to be life-size, but most are not and I think it would have heightened the impact if the reader could appreciate the true delicacy or impressive dimensions of the specimens. I am sure that an elegant solution could have been found.

Minor problems notwithstanding, this is overall an impressive book. It is also unusual, deeply individual and probably best enjoyed on its own terms – there is, after all, nothing else quite like it around.

Joanne Cooper

WARREN, M. **American Birding Sketchbook. (Langford Press Wildlife Art Series.)** 144 pages, 339 paintings. Peterborough: Langford Press, 2012. Hardback, £38.00, ISBN 978-1-904078-47-0. Website: <http://www.mikewarren.co.uk>.

This lovely book comes from a true birdwatcher-artist, Mike Warren. His home is in Nottinghamshire but his world includes five continents and, patently, not least the southern Nearctic. There, for two decades from the early 1970s and pursuing exhibitions and illustrative projects in conservation, he birded in every one of the States of the USA. As he did, he filled up a whole series of sketchbooks with images of the American avifauna and its niches.

Now, from an 11-month reworking, has come a veritable tapestry of delightful birds set in deliciously coloured habitats. The freshness of the original sketches has not been lost and so, while the artist's innate flair for design still shows, the true ornithology on the pages shines forth. Each painting or collection of scenes is identified by place and month. Many contain delightful background scenery and occasional artefacts. The accompanying texts in the author's own attractive hand are unpretentious, naming the birds and assisting interpretation of their acts.

Designed by his son Simon, the book shepherds over 300 paintings onto 144 pages, and the combined effect is astonishing. Instantly, I was transported to my one trans-Canada trek in 1956 and left wishing that my other trips 'across the pond' had not been on business.

To reuse the apt words of Robert Bateman's Foreword, the artist's 'celebration' of North American birds is 'very refreshing', I just add 'indeed'!

Well done, too, the Langford Press for publishing the 32nd completed title in its renewal of the tradition of great British natural history illustration.

D.I.M. Wallace

WONG TSU SHI. **A Naturalist's Guide to the Birds of Borneo: Sabah, Sarawak, Brunei and Kalimantan.** 176 pages, numerous colour photographs, maps on inside of front and back covers. Oxford: John Beaufoy Publishing, 2012. Paperback (card covers), £9.99, ISBN 978-1-906780-68-5. Website: <http://www.johnbeaufoy.com>.

Borneo, a land of head-hunters, ancient traditions, and amazing wild places, is also a paradise for birds. I know of very few places in Asia where there is such a tight link between man and bird and where the various species play an important role in the everyday life of local tribes. Despite this tight link, we still have only a rudimentary understanding of the biology of many of the island's bird species and there is still plenty to be discovered. Borneo harbours some 420 resident species, including 53 island endemics. Migrant birds from the north (and to a lesser degree from the south) add another 220 species to the list. Wong Tsu Shi's guide gives a photographic account of 280 of them, including 26 endemics.

Borneo is divided between three countries, Brunei and the Malaysian States of Sarawak and Sabah in the north and the Indonesian Kalimantan in the south. Kalimantan is about three times the size of the other parts combined and Brunei occupies a mere 1% of the island. While the guide sets out to be one for the entire island it soon becomes clear that the author has a strong focus towards Sabah and to a lesser extent Sarawak and Brunei, this bias being present throughout. For instance, Wong provides an overview of major birding sites, comprising 10 each in Sabah and Sarawak, five in Brunei but only eight for the whole of Kalimantan; species that are confined to the Indonesian part of the island are by and large ignored. However, the aim of the book is not to be encyclopaedic but to provide a handy guide for English-speaking (mainly foreign) birders. Tourism in Kalimantan is poorly developed and the Indonesian parts hence attract far fewer foreign visitors compared with the number that land and spend their holidays in the north of the island.

The photographs were all taken in the wild in Borneo, by the author, and are generally of high quality. For those who started birding before the widespread availability of digital cameras (and digiscoping) and grew up with the illustrations of A. M. Hughes in *The Birds of Borneo* (Smythies 1960) or M. Woodcock's in *A Field Guide to the Birds of South-East Asia* (King et al. 1975), it is amazing to see Borneo's birdlife captured on cam-

era. The photographs are carefully selected and tend to depict many of the key identifying features of the different species. Apart from the immature Tiger Shrike *Lanius tigrinus*, all species have adults depicted and 71 of the sexually dimorphic species have both males and females included. More than one morph is shown for only few species. I was especially impressed by the photographs of the white-eyes and allies (Zosteropidae), flowerpeckers (Dicaeidae) and barbets (Ramphastidae), but was somewhat disappointed with the pheasants and partridges (Phasianidae).

A useful checklist of Borneo's birds at the end of the book gives their status in each of the island states and their global conservation status. All Kalimantan records are amalgamated into one column; despite the infrequency of visits, it would have been better for birders, given the size of the area, if this had been presented province by province.

In conclusion, Wong's book is a welcome addition to the ever-growing list of bird guides that cover Borneo and is a clear illustration of how much Southeast Asian ornithology has matured in recent years. I truly hope that many of these guides will become available in Borneo (perhaps translated into Malay and Indonesian) and that this will set in motion a movement that will fill the current void in ornithological knowledge – the photographs are there, now we need the data on the birds.

Vincent Nijman

Also received

BELIK, V.P. (ed.) **Strepet: Fauna. Ekologiya i Okhrana Ptits Yuzhnoy Palearktiki [The Little Bustard: Status, Ecology and Conservation of Southern Palearctic Birds]. Volume 10(1).** (in Russian, with English Contents, abstracts and some captions). 120 pages, figures and tables. Rostov-on-Don: South Federal University, 2012. ISSN 1992-2361. Contact email: Dr V.P. Belik, vpbelik@mail.ru.

Four of six longer articles in this issue of *Strepet* were written or co-authored by the Editor. They begin with a summary of data (from the observer's diaries) on 169 non-passerines collected by M. M. Alferaki on the Lower Don in 1903–19, and a report on diurnal raptors and owls in a nature reserve in the Astrakhan' Region. G. M. Rusanov *et al.* (pp. 60–77) focus on 22 colonies of Pelecaniformes and Ciconiiformes in the Volga Delta, where monitoring showed a total of 47 000 breeding pairs. There is concern about habitat changes associated with the lower level of the Caspian Sea and increasing disturbance by man, notably wildfires in spring.

The results of three single-species studies are also presented: Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti* has expanded north-

west from the Terek and Volga Deltas and, in the last 20 years, over 500 km to the north in Western Siberia; the largest colony of Griffon Vultures *Gyps fulvus* in the Western Caucasus (Akhmet-Skala) held 15–40 pairs in 1987–2011, persisting despite variation in feeding conditions, though measures need to be taken to prevent disturbance by rock-climbers; Black Grouse *Tetrao tetrix* spread south in southern Russia at the beginning, but had retreated by the end of the 19th century, so that a fast-declining population of 20–50 birds now survives only in the Volgograd Region.

M.G.W.

HUDSON, W.H. **Adventures among Birds. (Collins Nature Library reprint; originally published by Hutchinson in 1913.) xvii + 253 pages.** London: Collins, 2012. Hardback, £20.00, ISBN 978-0-00-746640-5. Website: <http://www.harpercollins.co.uk>.

Hudson's best writing is about his experiences in boyhood on the Argentine pampas, which remained to him a visionary world, unspoilt before the Italian settlers, as was their wont, shot everything in sight – a 'purple land' as he called it. Here, having no binoculars, he caught small birds in order to inspect them more closely. Later in life, he was a hard-working and sometimes impoverished journalist-author in the last age when men could walk safely along dusty main roads in England.

In this work, which is mainly collected articles from the press, Hudson conveys the vanished atmosphere of that Edwardian world of shaggy farmland: Wessex from Hampshire to South Somerset; the rougher Peak country, with its Cuckoos *Cuculus canorus* and Ring Ouzels *Turdus torquatus*; the Marsh Warblers *Acrocephalus palustris* of Gloucestershire; a secret haunt of Dartford Warblers *Sylvia undata*; and one favourite area which has survived almost unchanged, the Norfolk goose fields between Wells and the North Sea. Hudson was a subtle analyst of song, and was always seeking empathy with birds, here most notably with 'The Tired Traveller', an autumn Redwing *Turdus iliacus*; metempsychosis seems never far from his thoughts. This is part of what Robert Macfarlane's excellent Introduction calls 'an unembarrassedly spiritual regard for nature'. He was a tireless opponent of huge Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus* shoots, where the keepers shot everything else, while their masters, 'rich men with their motor-cars', exercised no control. Some bird protection Acts were now on the statute book and he boldly sought the support of local grandees.

Such reprints keep alive the memory of pioneers. How he would have marvelled at the soaring Red Kites *Milvus milvus* over the M40!

D.K.B.