

# Book reviews

By seeking to identify the Australian problems by both novel and established methods this book will go a long way to stimulate new research and conservation efforts. It is appropriate that WWF and IUCN were involved in promoting the book at a time when both organisations have embarked on a world-wide campaign to stimulate interest in the world's flora. Let us hope that this fine evaluation of universal concepts providing us with a very useful status report will be emulated by other nations.

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\*Available from Globe Book Services, 107 Moray Street, South Melbourne, Victoria, Australia.

## **The Doves, Parrots, Louries and Cuckoos of Southern Africa**

M.K. Rowan

Croom Helm, London, 1983, £25.00

This volume, the third monograph on southern African birds to be published under the sponsorship of the John Voelcker Bird Book Fund, includes accounts of the indigenous species of four disparate families. Included here are the 13 species of doves and pigeons (Columbidae), six species of parrots and lovebirds (Psittacidae), three species of louries/turacos (Musophagidae) and 17 species of cuckoos and coucals (Cuculidae) which occur south of the Zambesi and Kunene Rivers.

The text by Mrs Rowan is based on an extensive and methodical extraction of data from a wide range of published (e.g. standard manuals, avifaunal lists, journals, newsletters) and unpublished sources (e.g. nest record cards, field notes, reports). Mrs Rowan also had the sagacity to enlist the help of an Advisory Panel of 30–35 eminent ornithologists with field experience who acted as referees and provided much new information. The species' accounts have been prepared in a standard pattern and include systematics, distribution and status, mensural data, plumage descriptions, social organisation, maintenance activities, reproduction, hybrids, moult, population dynamics, parasites, and relations with man. There are also clear maps showing the approximate distribution of those species that have a

restricted occurrence in the area, and eight, rather disappointing and dully coloured, plates by G. Arnott.

The author is to be congratulated for her impressive scholarship, concise, uncluttered writing, and the comprehensive coverage which includes references up to mid-1980. The book is not, and cannot have been intended to be, for any but the more serious birdwatcher and bird biologist, and as such it will be the standard reference work for many years. The wealth of knowledge within these covers should surely also be used for a series of well-illustrated books written for a wider public.

*P.J. Olney, Curator of Birds, Zoological Society of London*

## **The Bee-eaters**

C.H. Fry

T. and A.D. Poyser, Calton, 1983, £19.60

Surprisingly, not since Dresser's sumptuous monograph, published over 100 years ago, has a book been devoted to this spectacular family of birds. Needless to say, the original publication is very much out of date, not readily available, and far too expensive for most private libraries. The new publication, therefore, is most welcome and will fill an unwanted gap on many book shelves.

The main body of the 260-page text is divided into seven chapters: Introduction, Species Accounts, Origin of Species, Food and Foraging, Bee-eaters and Apiculture, Social and Reproductive Life, and Evolving Specific Differences. A further 47 pages are devoted to nine appendices, which contain a glossary of scientific terms, names of other birds and mammals mentioned, breeding localities of the European bee-eater in southern Africa, nesting sites of the carmine bee-eater, detailed lists of prey of the little, red-throated, white-throated and European bee-eaters, notes on aberrant plumages, a bibliography and an index. Also included are eight coloured plates by the author, illustrating the recognised species and the majority of subspecies, while John Busby provided more than 100 line drawings and the dust jacket.

This monograph is based upon 20 years of