

Newly Published

A Checklist of the Birds of New Guinea and Associated Islands (2008) by Phil Gregory Sicklebill Publications # 2. Kuranda.

A Checklist of the Birds of Australia and Its Island Territories (2008) by Phil Gregory Sicklebill Publications, # 1 Kuranda.

Available from the editor at Au\$ 12.00 inc. p & p. Both give an overview of the avifauna and are based around current taxonomic thinking, using morphology, calls and songs, range and behaviour as points to consider, as well as genetic evidence. Both avifaunas have been somewhat neglected, with long out-of-date checklists and a tendency to overlump species. The checklists are intended as a discussion point and to draw attention to neglected taxa. Distant island endemics and vagrants are shown as separate appendices, so it is easy to see the species occurring on the mainland and nearby islands, and to see the broad range of each species.

Systematics and Taxonomy of Australian Birds (2008) by Les Christidis and Walter E. Boles. CSIRO Publishing, Collingwood.

This is a long-awaited and thorough review of the whole Australian avifauna including the distant islands, by two eminent scientists. Heavily biased towards genetic evidence, with some controversial declarations, and naturally raises many unresolved issues, but an essential reference, A full review will appear in the next issue of *Muruk*.

The Birds of Zambia (2008) by R. J. Dowsett, the late D. Aspinwall and F. Dowsett-Lemaire. Tauraco Press, Liège.

This is another long-awaited review, this time of the Zambian avifauna. Excellent atlas data from many observers over two decades, but a disappointingly conservative, somewhat dated taxonomy detracts a bit from its value.

Shorebirds of Australia by A. Geering, L. Andrew and S. Harding (2007) CSIRO Publishing Collingwood. A useful compendium for all the species of shorebird regularly occurring in Australia, with generally good colour photos, and particularly valuable distribution maps done with dot points for outlying records. There are succinct and useful chapters on various aspects of ecology, migration and conservation, wader plumages and topography, and some eye-opening estimates of numbers: Red-capped Plovers are estimated as totalling 95000, Inland Dotterel just 14,000, Red-kneed Dotterel some 25000-1,000,000 and Black-fronted Dotterel at what seems an amazingly low 15,500. Australian Painted Snipe is estimated at 1500 whilst Broad-billed Sandpiper comes in at 10,000, a very significant percentage of the world population.

Raptors of the World. A Field Guide by I. J. Ferguson-Lees and D. A. Christie (2005) Helm. This is the sawn-off and fully revised shorter field guide-style version of the weighty *Raptors of the World* volume of 2001, with 25 newly split species, some 65 new raptor images and a pleasingly modern taxonomic viewpoint. Very good colour plates, abbreviated text, small, broad-brush but up-dated maps, a common-sense approach to the vexed question of English names and an invaluable checklist including all subspecies.