

## Reviews

***A photographic guide to the birds of India and the Indian Subcontinent, including Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka & the Maldives.* by Grewal, Bikram, Bill Harvey, and Otto Pfister, 2002. 1st ed. Singapore: Periplus Editions (HK) Ltd. 512 pages. \$29.95**

**Zafar Futehally**

# 2205, Oakwood Apartment, Jakkasandra Layout, Koramangala, 3<sup>rd</sup> Block, 8<sup>th</sup> Main, Bangalore 560034. Email: [zafar123@vsnl.net](mailto:zafar123@vsnl.net)

What a stream of books is flowing in! Whistler 1928, Salim Ali '41, Martin Woodcock '80, Grimmet *et al.* '98, Bikram 1993 onwards, Krys Kazmierczak 2001, Satish Pande (Birds of the Western Ghats) 2003.

Readers of the Newsletter are familiar with these books, though some of you may not have seen Bikram's latest about which I am writing. It has an attractive cover (very important, as "clothes make the man") is easy to handle, its 512 pages accommodated with the size of 6" x 4" x 1.5". Outstanding photographs and top class printing leave nothing to be desired and needless to comment on.

The book is up to date, dealing with 800 of the 1305 species which experts say now exist within the Subcontinent (Maldives too, included). Each page has at least one photograph of the described with a colour coded map. If it is a resident bird its distribution is shown in red. If a migrant it is shown in blue. The map relating to the Malabar Whistling Thrush *Myophonus horsfieldii* (Vigors, 1831), shows a red band along the Western Ghats with an arm spreading into Central India. In the case of the Blue Whistling Thrush *M. caeruleus* (Scopoli, 1786), there is a blob of red in the Himalayas coming down to the Bay of Bengal. Readers may recall that in the Newsletter of May/June 2003, Lt. Gen. Baljit Singh reports seeing this bird in Chandigarh. This shows the importance of the amateur birder in updating the work of scientists in the museums.

The book is beautifully organized and one learns many general facts, which add to our interest in the subject. The extended Introduction deals with: Enjoying birdwatching, ornithology in the region, bird movements, breeding, nomenclature, taxonomy and sequence and many other scientific topics explained in clear language. In the last decade the Orders, Families, Genera and Species have been altered, eliminated or added to, on the basis of DNA findings. We see from the Contents page that now there are 20 Families of Passerines and 41 Non-passerines. What remains unchanged is the number of birds endemic to India: 142. But we might, in course of time, rope in the Red-faced Malkoha *Phaenicophaeus pyrrhocephalus* (Pennant, 1769), reported by Lt. Gen. B. C. Nanda, from the Coorg forests a few years ago.

Apart from the usual indices of Common (English) and Scientific names there is also a Systematic List of Families

and Species which is often very helpful. An extensive bibliography and glossary and a section on useful addresses is a plus point added to its other qualities.

***Birds of the Indus.* by Mubashir Hasan, 2001. Karachi: Oxford University Press.**

**Aasheesh Pittie**

8-2-545 Road No. 7, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad 500034  
Email: [aasheesh@vsnl.in](mailto:aasheesh@vsnl.in)

Hardback (13.5 x 21.5cm, with illustrated dust cover), pp. i-xx, 1-348, 238 plates [colour photographs (236 of birds), by; T.J. Roberts (11), Mubashir Hasan (150), Syed Asad Ali (46), Khan Mohammad (13), F.J. Koning (2), Rudi Hess (1), Tim Hurrell (2), Robert R. Randall (1), Brenda Wheeler (1), Mark Malallieu (1) and, Rolf Passburg (8)]. ISBN 0-19-577938-X. Cover price Rs. 795/-.

*Contents:* Half-title and notice (p. i); title (p. iii); imprint (p. iv); dedication (p. v); Contents (pp. vii-x); Acknowledgements (pp. xi-xii); Introduction (pp. xiii-xx); text (pp. 1-329); References (pp. 331-333); Index of English names (pp. 335-339); Index of scientific names (pp. 340-344); Index of Urdu/Hindi names (pp. 345-348).

The following photographers have not been credited on the title page. Rudi Hess, Tim Hurrell, Robert R. Randall, Brenda Wheeler and Mark Malallieu.

This work is an example of what an abiding interest in a hobby can lead to. The author is a politician in Pakistan and bird photography is his hobby. Now that there are 'all-encompassing' handbooks on the birds of the Indian subcontinent, in the market, as there are too those covering each of the individual countries, we should see more work on restricted areas and habitats as well as monographs on taxa at various levels, in the future. Hasan's work limits itself to the birds of the Indus River watershed, for which he has selected c.236 species from 660 (p. xx) reported from Pakistan. The author gives a general introduction for each of the families he has selected, and then short species accounts, which are also general in nature, with some distribution notes, for each taxon. It is sad that the very motive for this work, the author's photographs, show up rather poorly, throughout. The editing too is slack at times: a picture of a falcon on page 70 is wrongly captioned "Shikra"; the photograph of nesting Cliff Swallows on page 209 is upside-down; to name a couple. The cover price is steep and not everyone can afford a copy easily.

***Petronia. Fifty years of post-Independence ornithology in India.* J.C. Daniel & Gayatri W. Ugra (Editors) (2003). Bombay: Bombay Natural History Society & Oxford University Press.**

**Aasheesh Pittie**

8-2-545 Road No. 7, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad 500034

Email: [aasheesh@vsnl.in](mailto:aasheesh@vsnl.in)

Hardback (18.0 x 24.0cm, with illustrated cover), pp. i-vii, 1-342+6, frontispiece (portrait of Dr Salim Ali), plates (colour & black & white), text-figures. ISBN 019-566653-4. Cover price Rs. 400/-.

*Contents:* Half-tit. (p. i); tit. (p. iii); imprint (p. iv); Preface (p. v, by; B.G. Deshmukh); Contents (pp. vi-vii); text (pp. 1-342); "Notes" (4 pp.); advt. (2 pp.).

This is a compilation of papers ("A centenary dedication to Dr. Salim Ali 1896-1996") published earlier in various volumes of the *Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society* (JBNHS)—except for a couple (see below). Only two papers are new. These are by Rishad Naoroji (pp. 46-52; Observations on the biology of the Mountain Hawk-Eagle) and Edward C. Moulton (pp. 295-317; The contributions of Allan O. Hume to the scientific advancement of Indian Ornithology).

The other papers are by the following authors: J.C. Daniel (pp. 1-6, published in *Hornbill*); Salim Ali—an appreciation); Lady Y.P. McNeice (p. 7; Salim A. Ali); J.B.S. Haldane (pp. 8-15; The non-violent scientific study of birds); Wan Tho Loke (pp. 16-23; Photographing the Whitebellied Sea Eagle *Haliaeetus leucogaster* (Gmelin)); V.C. Ambedkar and J.C. Daniel (pp. 24-45; A study of the migration of the Common Teal *Anas crecca* Linn., based on ring recoveries in India and USSR); Humayun Abdulali (pp. 53-58; On the food and other habits of the Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus roseus* Pallas in India); S. Dillon Ripley (pp. 59-66; Zoogeographic considerations on the Indian avifauna); Bharat Bhushan (pp. 67-80; The rediscovery of the Jerdon's or Double-banded Courser *Rhinoptilus bitorquatus*); Salim Ali & J.H. Cook (pp. 81-100; Observations on Finn's Baya *Ploceus megarhynchus* Hume rediscovered in the Kumaon terai); M.K. Himmatsinhji (pp. 101-103; Dr. Salim Ali's contribution to Kutch ornithology); Lavkumar Khacher (pp. 104-154; The birds of Gujarat – a Salim Ali centenary year overview); T.J. Roberts (pp. 155-162; Twentieth century changes in the avifauna of Pakistan); Thilo W. Hoffmann (pp. 163-171; New bird records in Sri Lanka and some connected matters); Anthony J. Gaston and V.J. Zacharias (pp. 172-184; The recent distribution of endemic and disjunct birds in Kerala: preliminary results of an ongoing survey); R. Sankaran [pp. 185-197; Aerial display in the Lesser Florican *Sypheotides indica* (J.F. Miller)]; Madhusudan Katti and Trevor Price (pp. 198-215; Effects of climate on Palaearctic warblers overwintering in India); P. Balasubramanian (pp. 216-230; Interactions between fruit-

eating birds and bird-dispersed plants in the tropical dry evergreen forest of Point Calimere, South India); Asad R. Rahmani (pp. 231-252; Strategies for long-term conservation of the Great Indian Bustard *Ardeotis nigriceps* in India); S. Subramanya (pp. 253-279; Distribution, status and conservation of Indian heronries); D.N. Mathew, George Mathew and Tara Gandhi (pp. 280-283; Breeding seasons and conservation of the terns *Sterna fuscata* and *Anous stolidus* in the Lakshadweep); Priya Davidar (pp. 284-287; Conservation priorities for the Andaman Islands); Ranjit Manakadan, S. Alagarrajan and J.C. Daniel (pp. 288-294, published in *Buceros*; The post-independence history of Indian ornithology); S.A. Hussain [pp. 318-342; Some aspects of the biology and ecology of the Narcondam Hornbill (*Rhyticeros narcondami*)].

Even though most of the papers in this commemorative volume have been published earlier, their quality is of a high standard and their intrinsic value timeless. The editors should be congratulated for re-publishing them in a separate single volume for future generations of serious amateur and professional ornithologists. Highly recommended, and affordable.

***A concise history of ornithology. The lives and works of its founding figures.* by Michael Walters, 2003. London: Christopher Helm.**

**Aasheesh Pittie**

8-2-545 Road No. 7, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad 500034

Email: [aasheesh@vsnl.in](mailto:aasheesh@vsnl.in)

Hardback. (17 x 24cm, illustrated dust cover with a brief biographical note on the author on back flap), pp. 1-255+1, 68 portraits (black & white), 25 illustrations (black & white photos, 1 double-page). (ISBN 1-873403-97-6.). Cover Price: £30/-.

*Contents:* Half-title (p. 1); title page (p. 3); imprint (p. 4); Contents (p. 5); Preface (pp. 9-10); Early times (pp. 11-19); The renaissance of Ornithology (pp. 20-51); Eighteenth century systems: Linnaeus, Brisson & Buffon, and their legacy (pp. 52-68); Pallas and the new awakening (pp. 69-74); Explorations of the Eighteenth Century (pp. 75-85); The Germans and the Dutch (pp. 86-95); The beginnings of American Ornithology (pp. 96-113); The Quinary and other Nineteenth Century systems (pp. 114-131); New theories, and explanations in the Far East (pp. 132-148); The turn of the Nineteenth Century and the introduction of trinomials (pp. 149-163); Ornithology and ornithologists in the Twentieth Century (pp. 164-175, by; John Coulson); Appendices 1-30 [pp. 176-235 (systems of classification)]; Appendices A & B (pp. 236-238); Bibliography (pp. 239-250); Index (pp. 251-255).

The chapter by John Coulson has the following sub-sections: Marking birds to study individuals (Survival and mortality rates; Colour-ringing; Behaviour; Telemetry; Transponders); Molecular studies in avian taxonomy,

systematics and biology (Paternity and pair fidelity; Taxonomy and systematics).

The 30 Appendices on systems of classification list the work of Walter Charleton, Möhring, J.C. Schaeffer, Brisson, Linnaeus (10th ed.), Linnaeus (12th ed.), Brünnich, Latham, Pallas, Gloger, Merrem, Blainville, L'Herminier, Nitzsch, Wagler, Lacépède, Illiger, Vieillot, Temminck, Bonaparte, Avium Conspectus of Tschudi, Cuvier, J.J. Kaup, Boie, Hogg, Huxley, Sundevall's Tentamen, Lilljeborg 1866, Reichenow, Fürbringer and, Gadow. Appendix 'A' is a list of birds from Emperor Rudolph II's collection, and Appendix 'B' is a list of birds described by Quoy & Gaimard on Freycinet's Voyage 1817-1820.

"This book is a detailed historical account of the study of birds, from the earliest written records through to the twentieth century...The lives and works of key ornithologists through history are presented here—the explorers, the naturalists and the conservationists who have painstakingly built up our knowledge and understanding of birds over the centuries. As this fascinating story approaches the modern era, it reveals how burgeoning knowledge and shifting ideologies have interacted to shape ornithology as the complex scientific discipline we recognise today..." (dust cover, front flap).

The history of mankind is the story of individuals, and so is the case with the history of Ornithology. The subject is so vast, and the episodes that make it up so engrossing, that a detailed account would warrant separate biographies of each player. But that is not the purpose of this work. It is not easy to paint a picture that reveals, on one canvas, such a history. A sweeping grasp of the subject is needed allowing one to look at it from a distance, ensuring that the horizons are wide enough to encompass enough detail to make the work both entertaining and revealing. The author, who was the curator of birds' eggs for 30 years at the Natural History Museum, Tring, UK, achieves this with brilliance.

I hope that the quote below, dealing with the Ornithology of the Indian region, will whet the appetite of readers to delve deeper in the history of a subject that is close to their heart.

"As late as the 1820s almost nothing was known of the ornithology of India except for some collections of native drawings made by Indian army officers. One of the earliest and best known of these was the collection of General Hardwicke, a selection of which were engraved and published in 1830, edited by J.E. Gray of the British Museum. It was about 1830 that the beginnings of scientific investigation were laid by the researches of Major Franklin and Colonel Sykes, both of whom wrote papers in the *Proceedings of the Zoological Society* for 1831-32. In 1832, the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* was commenced and published in Calcutta, which, along with a number of other journals, contained valuable papers by Hodgson, Hutton, Pearson, Tickell, McClelland and others. Hodgson, who resided in Nepal, was the pioneer in that country."

"However, the dominant figure in early 19<sup>th</sup> century Indian ornithology was Edward Blyth, who for many years was curator of the Asiatic Society's Museum at Calcutta. He was the first trained Zoologist of his time to go to India. Blyth was born in London on 23 December 1810, of a Norfolk family. His father died in 1820, and his mother originally intended him for a career in the Church, but, on advice from his headmaster, sent him to study chemistry. His passion for natural history disinclined him for any other pursuits, and, on coming of age, he opened a chemist's shop in Tooting, London, But he gave this business so little attention that it inevitably failed. He devoted all his time to ornithology and entomology, and contributed many papers on Zoology to the *Proceedings of the Zoological Society*. It was largely on the basis of his editing of Griffith's edition of Cuvier's *Le Règne Animal* that he was recruited by Horace Wilson in 1841 as curator of the Museum of the Asiatic Society of Bengal at Calcutta. For over 20 years he rendered devoted service to the Society, submitting detailed monthly reports (which often filled 15-20 pages), publishing many descriptions of new species. During all these years, he subsisted on a pittance of a salary, and his periodic applications for an increase in remuneration were cast aside. In spite of the disgraceful treatment he received at the hands of the Society, Blyth never made any complaint, and accepted the capricious and often unreasonable criticisms of his excellent work with equanimity. After his retirement, he wrote: "I had always a presentiment that my successor in the Museum would be more adequately remunerated, beginning with just double what I had after more than 20 years work..." Fuel for a court case today, but Blyth dismissed it philosophically, as the great-hearted and underrated man he was. Grote, in writing Blyth's obituary in 1875, remarked: "Few men who have written so much have left in their writings so little that is bitter." Blyth died after a long and exceptionally productive career, as one of the pioneer Zoologists in the continent of Asia. Sadly, he is little remembered today. He was the mentor of T.C. Jerdon, William Blandford [*sic* (=Blanford)], and particularly A.O. Hume. There is no rational explanation of why Blyth has been ignored by the history of Zoology. He aroused the malice of J.E. Gray of the British Museum, as a result of a complaint made against his brother G.R. Gray. This does not, however, explain his neglect in the 20<sup>th</sup> century."

"Allan Octavian Hume was born in 1829, the son of a Scottish MP. He served as a midshipman in the Royal Navy, studied medicine at University College Hospital and at the age of 20 was posted to the Bengal Civil Service. From 1849 to 1867, he served as district officer at Etawah in the NW Provinces, from 1867 to 1870 as commissioner to a centralized department, and from 1870 to 1879 as Secretary to the Government of India. He showed great gallantry during the Indian Mutiny in 1857, risking his life on several occasions. He worked tirelessly in promoting education, reforming the local police, and in 1859 founded a popular paper *The People's Friend*, published at a very low price so that it would be accessible to the poorest of village youths."

As Commissioner, he introduced agricultural reforms, suitable to the particular needs of the people. He was always sensitive to local and traditional practice and never sought to impose 'foreign' measures. Besides matters directly pertaining to agriculture and horticulture, Hume had to deal with forestry, including the conservation of forests, the restoration of denuded areas, and the supply of firewood to the public. He was also required to attend to fisheries, emigration, meteorological observations, museums, and exhibitions of art and industry, shipping, harbours, lighthouses and customs. In 1879, after 30 years of devoted service, he was summarily dismissed from his post in the secretariat of the Government of India, because he expressed his views freely, without regard to the opinions or intentions of his superiors. Hume retired from public service in 1882 and became founder of the Indian National Congress. For this purpose, he travelled to England in 1883 to seek the support of influential friends there. The First Session of the Congress was held from 25 to 30 December 1885. He seems to have been one of the few Englishmen completely trusted by the people of India, and he had

received many forewarnings of the Mutiny, in the hope that he could do something to avert the tragedy. He is a figure unjustly forgotten in Indian political history. On his return to Britain in 1894, he settled in Dulwich and threw himself into local politics, serving on many committees, often as Chairman or President. This was the man, who, in his 'spare time', studied the ornithology of the Indian sub-continent, and spent about £20,000 of his own money (a huge sum in those days) in accumulating an ornithological museum and library, which was the largest in Asia at that time. (It consisted of 63,000 bird skins and 19,000 eggs). He had planned to write a vast book on the ornithology of India and had made voluminous notes, but in 1884, while absent from home, a servant sold the manuscript in the market for waste paper. As a result, in 1885 he presented his entire collection to the Natural History Museum in London. In 1872, he had started, at his own expense, the journal *Stray Feathers*, edited it, and wrote many of the articles himself. It was published until 1899 when it had to be discontinued, as by then Hume was living in England," (pp. 156-157).

## Recently Published

### BOOKS

- BAMBARADENIYA, C. N. B., and S. P. Ekanayake, 2003. *A Guide to the Biodiversity of Knuckles Forest Region*. 1st ed. Colombo: I.U.C.N. Sri Lanka Country Office. (ISBN 955-8177-202.)
- BIRDLIFE INTERNATIONAL, 2003. *Saving Asia's Threatened Birds: A Guide for Government and Civil Society*. 1st ed. Cambridge, UK.: BirdLife International.
- DANIEL, J. C., and Gayatri W. Ugra, (Eds.) 2003. *Petronia. Fifty Years of Post-Independence Ornithology in India*. 1st ed. Bombay: Bombay Natural History Society & Oxford University Press. (ISBN 019-566653-4.)
- DICKINSON, Edward C., (Ed.) 2003. *The Howard and Moore Complete Checklist of the Birds of the World*. Revised and enlarged 3rd ed. London: Christopher Helm. (ISBN 0-7136-6536-X.)
- EMERTON, Lucy, and L. D. C. B. Kekulandala, 2003. *Assessment of the Economic Value of Muthurajawela Wetland Sanctuary*. (Occasional Papers of IUCN Sri Lanka, No. 4.) Colombo: IUCN Sri Lanka Country Office. (ISBN 955-8177-19-9.)
- GRIMMETT, Richard, and Tim Inskipp, 2003. *Birds of Northern India*. 1st ed. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- GUPTA, Reeta Dutta, 2003. *Salim Ali: India's Birdman*. (Charitavali Series.) New Delhi: Rupa & Co. (ISBN 81-291-0045-2.)
- JAVED, Salim, and Rahul Kaul, 2003. *Field Methods for Bird Surveys*. 1st ed. New Delhi: Bombay Natural History Society; Department of Wildlife Sciences; Aligarh Muslim University; World Pheasant Association, South Asia Regional Office (SARO).
- LEWIS, Michael, 2003. *Inventing Global Ecology: Tracking the Biodiversity Ideal in India, 1945-1997*. 1st ed. (New Perspectives in South Asian History, 5.) New Delhi: Orient Longman. (ISBN 81-250-2377-1.)
- MANAKADAN, Ranjit, and V. Kannan, 2003. *A study of the Spot-billed Pelican Pelecanus philippensis Gmelin in southern India with special reference to its conservation: Final report 2000-2003*. (Unpublished Report.) Mumbai: Bombay Natural History Society.
- MONGA, Sunjoy, 2003. *Birds of Mumbai*. 1st ed. Mumbai: India Book House. (ISBN 81-7508-391-3.)
- PANDE, Satish, Saleel Tambe, Clement Francis M, and Niranjana Sant, 2003. *Birds of Western Ghats, Kokan and Malabar (Including Birds of Goa)*. 1st ed. Mumbai: Bombay Natural History Society, Oxford University Press. Hbk. (ISBN 019566878-2.)
- PRAKRITI SAMSDAD, 2003. *Participant's Guide: Migratory Birdwatch 2003. Santragachhi Railway Jheel*. Kolkata: Prakriti Samsad.
- REUBEN, Rachel, (Ed.) 2003. *Humayun Abdulali-Naturalist. Portrait and Tribute*. New Delhi: Mosaic Books. (ISBN 81-901297-6-7.)
- WALTERS, Michael, 2003. *A Concise History of Ornithology. The Lives and Works of its Founding Figures*. 1st ed. London: Christopher Helm. (ISBN 1-873403-97-6.)
- WHITAKER, Zai, 2003. *Salim Ali for schools. A children's biography*. 1st ed. Delhi: Permanent Black. (ISBN 81-7824-058-0.)