

for flight—yet marred by several incorrect or misleading statements and illustrations.

The meat of the book is a series of family accounts, arranged mainly in the Wetmore sequence. Differences of opinion on the classification of orders and families are stated briefly in a prefatory note, adequate for the book's intended audience. Within families, the number and arrangement of species tend to follow Gruson (1976) although they have been modified where desired by the specialist-contributors. The series has been divided into three sections (Ostrich to finfoots, plovers to woodpeckers, and passerines), though to no evident purpose. Large or distinctive families are given separate chapters, whereas small or closely related ones are combined.

For each family, basic data are given in standardized format within one or two tables: a distribution map; a summary of habitat, body size, appearance, voice, breeding habits, and diet; and a list of all or selected species. The text goes into more detail, characterizes the subgroups, if any, and integrates the biology so as to show the chief adaptations in the family. Conservation problems are often discussed, and the status of possibly endangered species is indicated by symbols.

Many accounts contain sidebars or short feature articles that either delve into a special aspect of the family or use the group as illustrative of a common phenomenon. For example, the chapter on penguins carries one piece on diving and another on adaptations for breeding in a very cold environment.

Selection of species and topics is always a hazard in books of this kind. Knowledgeable readers will feel that some subjects have been given short shrift in this book. There is a tendency to favor western European members of wide-ranging families and to regard them as representative of their group. On the whole, though, the articles are accurate and well balanced.

Illustrations are a major component of this book. Many of the photographs and drawings are excellent, although faulty morphological details in some of the drawings suggest that the artists did not understand the reference pictures from which they were working.

The distribution maps are all in the same format, which aids comparison of ranges but means that limited ranges, especially on coasts and islands, are hard to see. In the map for the ranges of cuckoos and turacos, the labels are reversed.

The list of references is thin, particularly in regard to general works and those on families or groups. The book includes a glossary of ornithological and other biological terms, a welcome and unique feature in works of this kind.

This is just the sort of book that many of us would have pored over as youngsters, entranced by the beauty, diversity, and strange ways in the Class Aves. If you need a reference on bird families, this is the volume of choice. But if you have a copy of Evans' *Birds* (1899) or Knowlton's *Birds of the world* (1909), don't give them up; they contain details of morphology and nesting that all the newer works have left out.—PETER STETTENHEIM, Meriden Road #64-255, Lebanon, NH 03766.

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