

developed after several showed particular interest in the barbecue. The crab population exhibited a wide range of biometrics and characters and were given the appropriate team members' names!

RESEARCH PAPERS WANTED

Thiru Raajalinga Raja is currently undertaking research on the shorebirds of the Great Vedaranyam Swamp in Tamilnadu, India. He would be particularly grateful for copies of recent research papers on habitat utilisation, activity budgets, wader food and feeding and the effects of human disturbance. Any WSG member able to help with copies of literature in these areas is asked to send them to: Thiru S.V. Raajalinga Raja, C2 Staff Quarters, Arignar Anna Zoological Park, Vandalur, Madras - 48, India.

Thank you!

Many thanks to all those who have helped recently with all stages of *Bulletin* publication:

EDITORIAL

Rob Butler, Nick Davidson, Nigel Clark, Tony Fox, Rhys Green, Phil Grice, Geoffrey Harper, Phil Holland, Henk Koffijberg, Elena Lebedova, John Marchant, Lys Muirhead, Taej Mundkar, Mike Pienkowski, Hans-Ulrich Rösner, Greg Ruiz, Des Thompson, Robin Ward and Sylvia White.

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REVIEWS

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Rogers, A. 1992. *Addicted to birds*. Published by the author. 240 pp. 84 colour photographs. ISBN 0 646 11194 9.

Available for Australian \$25 plus postage and packaging (\$4 in Australia, \$10 elsewhere), from Annie Rogers, 340 Ninks Road, St Andrews, Victoria, Australia 3761.

Addicted to birds is different to most of the books that find their way into the *WSG Bulletin* review pages. It is not explicitly about waders. The area it covers is inhabited by just over two percent of the Wader Study Group membership. Much of the book is about passerines or other bush birds, most of which are endemic to an island west of New Zealand (Australia). Most of us will have remarkably few clues about what these birds are like, so why does it happen to be reviewed here?

Simply because it is a splendid book, about birds, birders, and especially bird banders (or ringers, if you prefer). Annie Rogers is a third of the well known 'Australian' trio of Annie, Ken and Danny, and *Addicted to birds* details their communal slide from normal people into dedicated banders.

The story starts in Iran, taking in the Caspian coast, deserts and mountains and moves briefly to South Korea and settles in Australia. What you have over that time is a wonderful collection of tales of how regular birders got into banding, from which they have never extricated themselves. (Nor would they want to, and after reading this book you will know why!)

There is something for everyone here. For non-banders there are first-hand insights into what banders really get up to; for banders there are tales of trials and tribulations that all will identify with; for waderologists there is

exposure to the fact that there are other birds in the world; (for non-waderologists there is also this same realisation); and for everyone there is the undeniable message that 'amateurs' can and do have a huge impact on ornithology. Nowhere is this more obvious than in Australia where the Rogers privately published a manual for the ageing and sexing of bush birds, based on their years of experience in weekend banding trips.

The book is extremely easy to read, and the anecdotes and tales of personal embarrassment for those who have ended up on trips with the Rogers make for compelling reading. There is a good section on waders in Australia, and you can learn all about the first of the now legendary north-west Australian banding expeditions (see *Notes and News* p. 5-6 this *Bulletin*). It is easy to forget that the Australian north-west was only 'discovered' not much over a decade ago - how many other wader habitats do we know nothing about?

You don't need to know anything about Australia to enjoy *Addicted to birds* (Annie's first knowledge about Australia came from a documentary called "Australia, the land with more venomous creatures than anywhere else on earth"! - the stories are the same even if the species and people are different.

The tales range from the frustratingly quizzical ("They were almost close enough to look for rarities amongst the flocks when a man stood up in the back of the boat and clapped. Of course all the birds took off. Ken and Danny asked him in amazement - "Why did you do that?" His reply was "I wanted to see them fly""); to the all too familiar ("... "Oops, I see you've found it" as I suddenly sank up to my waist in water ..."); and the bluntly honest ("Having transcribed for most of the day, I would be quite irate by this time. "What's the point in writing this stuff down if no-one can bloody well read it?" I would find myself screaming at him "And what the hell is FAP?" ...").

The language is surprisingly free of Australian idiosyncrasies, although it may be important to know that an "Esky" is a chilli-bin (if that helps at

all), but even I, another southerner (New Zealand, however) have no idea what sort of occupation a "jillaroo" is.

If you need an incentive to read this book then try this: Great Knot, Asian Dowitcher, Oriental Plover, Spotted Pardalote, Perentie, Red-browed Firetail, Common Wombat and Chiming Wedgebill (and if you can't identify the mammal and the reptile in the list, then you should read this book!) But it is the people as much as the birds that make this book and some well known wader workers grace its pages, such as Clive Minton (complete with lovely photo wearing tights and braces), Brett Lane, Mark Barter and Duncan Parish. A collection of 85 colour pictures puts faces and places to the text, as well as a variety of birds (even if the only photo they took of adult pelicans happened to be of birds apparently flying upside-down...)

I found *Addicted to birds* to be one of the most enjoyable books on birding I have read, and I am sure that some of the Roger's dedication and enthusiasm will rub off on anyone who reads it.

Heartily recommended, whatever your ornithological leaning.

Phil Battley

Kalchreuter, H 1994. Fourth European Woodcock and Snipe Workshop. *IWRB Publication 31*, Slimbridge.

ISBN 0 9505731 4 0. £12 from IWRB, Slimbridge, Gloucester, GL2 7BX, UK.

Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola* and Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* do not seem to be among the most popular wader species for the ornithologist to study. Their habits dictate a measure of ingenuity and a good deal of stamina if direct observation is your aim - do you fancy spending your winter nights wandering cold dark fields with a spotlight looking for Woodcock? On the other hand, these species are popular for study amongst more analytically-minded hunters - hardly

surprising when most ring-recoveries come from shot birds.

You won't learn all there is to know about the four European species from the proceedings of the fourth workshop held by IWRB's Woodcock and Snipe Research Group (WSRG). The papers will, however, provide an insight into the types of studies undertaken around Europe. These range from an intensive study of a few fields in Cornwall - for which Andrew Hoodless wandered the cold dark fields with his spotlight for four winters - to an ambitious extensive Woodcock monitoring scheme covering 52 French *departements*.

Seven of the twelve papers on *la Becasse* (woodcock) are in French, although English summaries are provided. The papers include summaries of regional status (*e.g.* in Russia and the former Yugoslavia), analyses of bag statistics (*e.g.* from Morocco, the Netherlands and Spain) and hunting practice and implications for sustainable use. Burlando, Fadat and Spano also provide a summary of

current theories regarding the occurrence of woodcocks with significantly shorter bills than 'normal', which turn up regularly in certain areas. Twitchers can relax though - the separate species hypothesis is rejected so there won't be any soul-searching over whether or not "*that bird really did have a short bill.*"

The four papers on *la Becassine* (snipe) - two on Common Snipe, one on all three European snipes in the eastern Baltic, and one on moult and migration of Great Snipe *Gallinago media* - are all in English. The latter, a methodical study of over 600 Great Snipe collected in Nigeria, has much in common with most of the papers - it raises more questions than it answers. Herby Kalchreuter's write-up of a round table discussion on wise use of Woodcock and Snipe populations identifies the main questions and summarises current knowledge. It rounds off a publication which is essential reading for anyone working at the interface between hunting, conservation and policy, as well as being of more general ornithological interest.

John Holmes

