

Book Reviews

Book Review Editor's Note: We are continuing to use the current currency codes. Thus Canadian dollars are CAD, U.S. dollars are USD, Euros are EUR, China Yuan Remimbi are CNY, Australian dollars are AUD and so on.

Editor's Note. The address of the Birds of Northumberland County website has been changed to <http://www.willowbeach-fieldnaturalists.org/Northumberland-County>. This is part of the Willow Beach Field Naturalists' website, but the URL above will take you directly to the Birds of Northumberland County. Please note that the URL is case sensitive. From Clive Goodwin.

ZOOLOGY

Where to Watch Birds in Canterbury (New Zealand)

By Nick Allen. 2012. Toltech Print, 21 Gasson Street, Christchurch, New Zealand. 169 pages, 29.99 NZD, Paper.

New Zealand is a stunningly beautiful country with an odd avifaunal history. The region of Canterbury is a great chunk of land covering half the eastern side of South island. It encompasses the Canterbury Plains and the surrounding mountains. Its main city, Christchurch, is a lovely town set in this scenic landscape. Recently it suffered a devastating earthquake that caused much damage. Happily the wildlife seems to have survived and this new book, written after the quake, will help naturalists find birds in this region.

The book is divided into 14 sections of areas centred around Christchurch that each has a regional map. The sections are further divided into areas that also have a map. The text gives an overview of the sites with brief notes on accommodation and transport. The roads and trails are described, including hazards like mud or floods. The birds that are found at the site are listed under four headings; usual, probable, possible and vagrants. These assessments are honest and do not create false expectations.

The last section of the book is an annotated list of birds and where to find them. For example under Australian Gannet the author suggests looking out from headlands. This I did, without success, but the advice was clearly sound. For Little Black Shag the entry states

tiny numbers can be seen at Bromley Oxidation Ponds. This time I was successful seeing one bird – a tiny number indeed. The author explains that Black-fronted Terns are found on farmland and White-fronted Terns were coastal. This proved valid and I finally saw a small group of Black-fronted Terns over a farm field after searching in vain over the sea. Each species is coded to the sites covered in the guide.

It is a really useful book for the visitor and resident alike. I would have no problems finding all the places and knowing what to look for. That said I would have liked a far clearer regional map, especially if it was colour coded to the 14 chapters. I did find it difficult to orient myself at times. The book does not have an index which adds a little more work to finding items. It would have been nice to have had photographs of birds and locations. At just over \$25 Canadian the book is not expensive so buyers will not mind a few dollars more for a handful of illustrations. Once you have familiarized yourself then the book becomes a useful tool. I would recommend it to all visiting birders and many "Kiwis" will also find it valuable.

ROY JOHN

2193 Emard Crescent, Ottawa, ON, K1J 6K5

The World's Rarest Birds

By Erik Hirschfeld, Andy Swash and Robert Still. 2013. Princeton University Press, 41 William Street, Princeton, NJ, USA, 08540-5237. 360 pages, 45.00 USD, Cloth.

This book is a delight and a distress. I expected to find accounts of species I had searched for knowing their rarity. Birds such as Whooping Crane, Bengal Florican, Red-breasted Goose and Brown Kiwi to name a few. Imagine my dismay at seeing a photo of a Eurasian Turtle Dove in the first few pages. This was a bird I saw often in my youth and associated its

soft purring with warm, sunny days. Last March I did not see any in the UK, but assumed (correctly) I was too early. It seems as though this bird is in trouble, having lost 60% of its world population (The RSPB recently quoted a 93% loss for the UK). The Black-browed Albatross was another surprise, until I looked at my notes. On trips south I saw several thousand ten



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