

REVIEW

"Guide to the identification and ageing of Holarctic Waders" by A.J. Prater, J.H. Marchant and J. Vuorinen. B.T.O., Tring.

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This, the seventeenth B.T.O. Guide, is the most ambitious in its wide geographical coverage, yet attempted by the British Trust for Ornithology. All 118 species of waders recorded in the holarctic region are dealt with. Obviously the amount of data for any one species must vary considerably from the well known and well studied species such as the European Oystercatcher Haematopus ostralegus to poorly studied species such as the Great Stone Plover Esacus recurvirostris. Unfortunately the editors have not made sufficient effort to tap knowledge resources on such species as our own Spotted Dikkop (Thick-knee) Burhinus capensis which occurs peripherally in Arabia and for which little information exists outside of southern Africa.

The guide is intended primarily for use by ringers but the information provided is also considered as of use to museum workers and bird-watchers, in general. Apart from an introductory section explaining the scope of the guide, detail on feather terminology, moult, sexing, geographical variation, biometrics and general methods of ageing waders, the bulk of the text concerns all information available on identification, ageing, sexing, moult, biometrics and racial characteristics.

The authors have been careful to admit that much supplementary information is required on many species and no doubt when this is forthcoming the guide will be updated. Certainly information on Painted Snipe Rostratula benghalensis, Black Oystercatcher Haematopus moquini, Water Dikkop (Senegal Thick-knee) Burhinus

senegalensis, Spotted Dikkop and Black-winged Pratincole
Glareola nordmanni could be added by South African ringers.

The few black and white photographs, which are generally of a high standard, show mainly juvenile plumages of some commoner waders but are not sufficiently comprehensive to be of more than passing interest. I also feel that a comparison table, showing the main identification features of that difficult group of small *Calidris* waders (i.e. stints etc.) would have been of some value. And of course colour plates of all species would then put this publication right out on the best-seller list but no doubt the costs would be prohibitive.

This is a useful book for bird ringers but in its present form I doubt if it would be of a lot of use to casual bird-watchers who prefer pictorial guides rather than complicated verbal descriptions.

LITTLE SHEARWATER

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Little Shearwater (*Puffinus assimilis* Gould, 1838) is a seabird very rarely encountered off the South African coast. The species is represented by a specimen caught on a fishing vessel off Durban (Clancey 1964), another washed up on the Cape Peninsula (McLachlan & Liversidge 1978) and a sighting at sea between Cape Point and Cape Agulhas (Rozendaal 1977).

An adult was found roosting at night (21h00) on 24.5.78 on the edge of a penguin (*Spheniscus demersus*) colony on St Croix Island, Algoa Bay. It was captured by hand, after blinding it with torch light, and then ringed (ring number 5-62906). The bird was recaptured at exactly the same position on 3.7.78 at 22h10.