The Birds of the Thai-Malay Peninsula

By David R. Wells, with contributions by Philip D. Round & Uthai Treesucon.
648 pages; 70 colour plates; 12 maps.
This is the first volume of a two-volume handbook detailing all that is known on the avifauna of mainland southeast Asia, and offshore Burmese, Thai, Malaysian and Singaporean islands, south of latitude 11°N. This latitude is the northern limit of true rain forest in the region and consequently of typical Sunda forest birds.

After 37 pages of highly authoritative introduction, guide to format, gazetteer and maps, there is the real meat of the book, some 600 pages covering 385 non-passerine species. There are also 19 pages of references. Each species account is divided into 16 sections, with that on identification/description consistently being very detailed. Other sections vary greatly in length, depending on the depth of knowledge on each species within the region: opportunities for original studies are very apparent.

Eight artists have contributed a total of 70 colour plates. The various styles blend quite effectively and most illustrations are attractive and accurate, but to my eye some of Dana Gardner’s appear rather plastic and ‘featherless’. The variation of scale on individual plates by Chris Rose is unhelpful, and the spatulate tip given to Spoon-billed Sandpiper Eurynorhynchus pygmeus is far too large. The raptors by Peter Hayman and R. David Digby are superb, but why are there so few flight portrayals, often essential aids to identification?

This is a beautifully produced book, with an extremely thorough text, which every enthusiast of southeast Asian birds will want to own. We must hope that we shall not have to wait too long for the passerine volume.

NICK DYMOND

Towards the Sea

By Robert Greenhalf.

At long last, a book devoted to Robert Greenhalf’s evocative sketches and paintings. And what a treat it is: page after page of beautifully reproduced, freely handled watercolours, mostly painted directly from life. They are united by the proximity of the three main locations to the sea: Romney Marsh (Bob’s home), North Norfolk and Bardsey Island. The contrasting habitats provide a rich variety of bird life. interspersed are diary extracts and brief essays, word pictures as eloquent as the paintings. Wonderful!

ROBERT GILLMOR
**In Search of Ross’s Gull**
By Michael Densley.

In July 1990, Michael Densley stood on a marsh in the Kolyma Delta beside the nest of a pair of Ross’s Gulls *Rhodostethia rosea*, and exulted that he had at last achieved the ultimate goal of his life. His experiences of Ross’s Gull in Siberia – and in England, Alaska and Canada – are blended together with all that he has learnt from museum collections and the literature of English and Russian journals. He has also carefully researched the lives of explorers and naturalists whose work added to our knowledge. His style may not appeal to those who like ornithological facts presented in a systematic way, but it will delight anyone who has dreamt of reaching the breeding grounds of an Arctic bird. Those who have made the effort required will enjoy it even more. It will remind them not just of the birds, but also of the plants, butterflies, mammals, mosquitoes, delayed flights, bizarre meals and all the other sought and unsought delights and discomforts of northern adventures.

Barbara Mearns

**Also received**

**The Guadeloupe Woodpecker**

**The Origin and Evolution of Birds**