

BOOK REVIEW

A naturalist in New Guinea. Bruce M. Beehler. 1991. Photographs by the author, illustrations by John Anderton, University of Texas Press, Austin 251 pages. ISBN 0-292-75541, Cloth (Price US\$8.95).

The present book should not be considered a field guide. Of some 725 species of birds known from New Guinea (Beehler, Pratt & Zimmerman, 1976), the author provides natural history anecdotes on some 116 species here, of which 26 are illustrated in colour. Persons unfamiliar with the avifauna of New Guinea may find this number overwhelming but for persons interested in the ornithology of this island continent or for naturalists working there, the book makes fascinating reading. Perhaps the work can be considered semi-scientific in scope, especially considering what little is known about many of the bird species there. More extensive use of Latin names (rather than just with the English vernacular) could have been done - of the 116 common names provided, only 43 have Latin names.

The reference section is a valuable part of this book, as any researcher working in New Guinea will appreciate when they undertake a literature search using the limited library resources available in many parts of this developing region. The authors observations on the flora and fauna of the English Peaks (Chapter 9) are particularly invaluable due to the paucity of information on this pristine subalpine wilderness area. The paper by Coode & Stevens (1972, PNG Science Society Proceedings, 23: 18-25) could have been included as it supplies more specific information on the vegetation of Mt. Scratchly in the Owen Stanley Mountain Range where MacGregor's Bird of Paradise was studied.

The term "Papua-New Guinea" should not be used in the title of the book as the author has done when he devotes one full section (chapter 7) to Irian Jaya. Most of the text however, deals with the author's adventures in the eastern side of the island. Biologists or naturalists who visit the sites the author discusses in this book will find their adventures even more rewarding after reading his accounts.

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