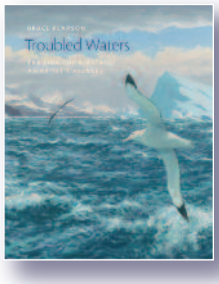
REVIEWS

Troubled Waters. Trailing the albatross, an artist's journey By Bruce Pearson. Langford Press, Peterborough. 2012. ISBN 978-1-904078-48-7. 135 pages, lavishly illustrated with numerous paintings and sketches. Hardback, £38.00.



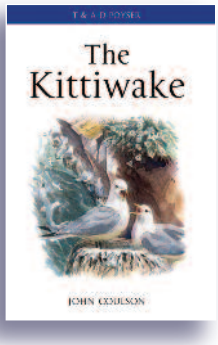
Once in a while one comes across a truly inspirational book. My reading of Ronald Lockley's *I Know an Island* fired my lifetime enthusiasm for seabirds and islands; Bruce Pearson's latest book will surely do the same for some of its readers. Most people will be attracted to the book by the paintings and sketches that can only be described as magnificent. However, this is far more than a picture book. The writing is both factual and evocative. By the time the readers get to the end, they will have learnt a lot, want to rush to the Southern Ocean and, hopefully, support initiatives such as the Save the Albatross campaign to reduce the by-catch of seabirds by the world's fisheries. The deadline for this review meant that I had to read the book from a pdf file on my computer. This was far from ideal but I got so engrossed in the text that I initially flicked past much of the artwork, only later to return to enjoy it at leisure.

"With their vast extent, changing moods of calm and storm; sheer beauty and otherworldly sense of place, the world's great oceans are largely beyond most people's experience and imagination. Home to a small number of hardy professional mariners, merchant seamen, fishermen, and a few oceanic explorers, only a privileged few experience the deep ocean at first hand. Unless great storms blow ashore and strand hapless seabirds on our beaches, most of us are insulated from the sea's true nature, and from the exotic, enigmatic birds that live far beyond the horizon of Coleridge's 'painted ocean'. But, over thirty five years ago, a privileged encounter with a young wandering albatross on a remote island in the Southern Ocean fired my imagination about albatrosses". Thus starts the narrative of a love affair with the sea and its birds. The initial chapter tells how, while working for the RSPB, Bruce Pearson got to know some of the scientists from the nearby British Antarctic Survey headquarters in Cambridge. This ended up in him being offered (in a pub) a job by Pete Prince as a field assistant at Bird Island, South Georgia. Pearson was captivated by albatrosses and becoming passionate concerning the fate that has subsequently befallen most of their populations due to man's fishing activities. The next three chapters describe his initial voyages south and his days of learning about southern seabirds by hands-on research. Then comes 'Hooked and tangled', an enthralling and well-balanced account of trips Bruce Pearson made on a long-liner and a trawler out of South Africa to see at firsthand how the fishing industry works and the mitigation measures being taken to reduce the large by-catch of seabirds. One can only marvel how fishermen manage to work in these conditions but I find it incomprehensible how anyone can sketch, let alone paint. The final chapter describes a recent trip to South Georgia on a 22 m yacht and his reflections of the changes that have occurred to this island and its wildlife over the last 50 years. Although a long time, this is still within the lifespan of some Wandering Albatrosses *Diomedea exulans*.

As I initially flicked past the paintings, especially those of specimens, I was reminded of the work of Edward Wilson, who died so heroically with Scott on the way back from the South Pole in 1912. Pearson acknowledges the influence that Wilson's paintings and sketches have had on his development as an artist, so I dusted off my copy of Brian Roberts' *Birds of Antarctica* to look again at Wilson's historic paintings. Comparing the outputs of two exceptional artists working under extreme conditions is probably unfair, but few of the paintings of Wilson that I have seen can compare with Pearson's treatment of views, seascapes and soaring seabirds presented here. He is an exceptional artist.

In his foreword, John Croxall writes "We owe Bruce a considerable debt for his unstinting efforts to bring albatrosses and their plight to the public eye; I commend this powerful and beautiful book to all who care about seabirds and seas." I can only echo these sentiments; anyone with an interest in seabirds, wildlife art or South Georgia should have this volume in their bookcase.

Mike Harris



The Kittiwake By John C. Coulson. Illustrations by Robert Greenhalf. T & AD Poyser, London. 2011. ISBN 978-14081-09663. 304 pages, 25 colour photographs, many b/w figures. Hardback, £50.00.

John Coulson is for many of us 'Mr Kittiwake' and thus it was with great anticipation that I opened this book of a lifetime's study, hoping to gain greater insight into the species. The author has published many papers on kittiwakes and their coloniality over the last sixty years and this book summarises much of that work. Following an introduction that places much emphasis on nesting, one and a half chapters deal with kittiwakes away from the colony, followed by nine and a half chapters primarily focussed on biology at the colony and one on the interaction of humans and kittiwakes. Four appendices provide further detail on the studies at colonies.

In focussing on his own studies, much work by others on the species is downplayed or ignored and I feel the book therefore does not present a rounded picture of kittiwakes. From a personal point of view, the omission of all of the work done by the Seabirds at Sea Team around the UK in the 1980s and 1990s is odd - and leads to statements, such as that under "dubious sources of food", that kittiwakes only exceptionally pirate food from alcids. Anyone going to sea in August-September in the North Sea will find the fastest way of finding Razorbills *Alca torda* in particular is to look for the attendant kittiwake - probably attempting to pirate food being fed by the male to its offspring. This lack of acknowledgement of at-sea work leads also to a conclusion calling for more biologists to be put at key sites far from land to better understand the habitat needs of the species. Elsewhere in the food and feeding chapter of the book, the author reviews the relationship between kittiwake breeding success and commercial fisheries for sandeels. Very little of this is referenced - and the important reviews such as those carried out by groups working under the auspices of the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea are not covered. The author appears to assume that there would be a direct correlation between breeding success and fishing intensity - which of course would be very surprising should it occur due to the number of factors that affect both parts of the relationship.

The author adopts a rather opinionated approach throughout the book, which leads to some rather surprising statements such as "a search of the literature reveals that there are very few seabird species that exhibit both solitary and colonial nesting", then mentioning Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*, Common Gull *Larus canus*, Great Black-backed Gull *L. marinus* and older Herring Gulls *L. argentatus*, but not for example the Great *Stercorarius skua* and Arctic Skuas *S. parasiticus*, Black-headed Gull *Croicocephalus ridibundus*, Northern Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis* and, while it is difficult to be sure that only one nest exists of the small burrow nesting birds such as storm-petrels, there are plenty of the references in the literature to islets with only one pair present. There is also a tendency to review the work of other authors and then dismiss it through a statement of opinion not supported by any literature or other fact. Some statements appear to be based on the assumption that the kittiwakes breeding at the author's main study site, at a unique location (for this species) in an urban setting some distance inland up a major river in NE England have the same ecology as those nesting on normal colonies on cliffs at the coast. Whilst I am sure that some aspects of coloniality between these two sorts of sites will be the same, I am much less sure about feeding ecology and the effects of other factors such as the presence of other seabirds.

Two pages are devoted to arguing about an apparently anomalous high count in 1979 of kittiwakes nesting at England's largest complex of colonies on Flamborough Head, this count first appearing in one of the author's own papers (Coulson 1983. *Bird Study* 30: 9–16) and subsequently being repeated in the account of the Seabird Colony Register census (Lloyd *et al*. 1991. *The Status of Seabirds in Britain and Ireland*). I think it is quite correct to question published anomalies, but it is unfortunate that this did not happen sooner, when there might have been a reasonable chance of finding further evidence or of checking the figures. Knowledge of kittiwake distribution and abundance in former times is, as with many species, poor. It

does though seem likely that growth in numbers might have been highest in areas where the species was previously persecuted. The taking of birds from Flamborough Head, primarily for the plumage trade, was one of the main triggers for the first legislation to conserve seabirds in the mid 19th century (not the 20th century as stated in the book).

The book helps identify areas where further research would be illuminating. Disease is mentioned at several places, this being (in the author's view) the main form of mortality, yet remarkably little is known about this as shown by the sole long paragraph devoted to the topic. The book does an admirable job at describing the low level of philopatry in the kittiwake (probably a common feature in many colonial seabirds) demonstrating just how large "populations" need to be if a realistic assessment is to be made of conservation status, but also leaving the question open as to what makes a colony attractive to a new recruit.

Overall, the book is a good summary of the work of the author on kittiwakes, but anyone wishing to get a rounded idea of the ecology of this, one of the most oceanic of gulls, will need to read further and elsewhere.

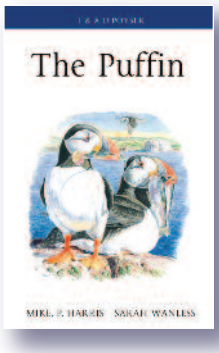
Mark Tasker

The Puffin By Mike P. Harris and Sarah Wanless. Illustrations by Keith Brockie. T & AD Poyser, London. 2011. ISBN 978-1-4081-0867-3. 256 pages, 16 pages of colour photographs, numerous black and white illustrations, figures and tables. Hardback. £50.00.

Seabird research, monitoring and technology have progressed dramatically since the first Poyser *The Puffin* was published in 1984. The Introduction states that while the original has been used as a foundation, this volume is intended to update an overview of our knowledge of Puffins, making use of studies throughout the species' range as well as the authors' own research on the Isle of May, and highlight what still isn't known. There are 15 chapters in both books, but this seems a coincidence as there has been considerable re-ordering and expansion of the topics covered. The 14 appendices present much useful data, and all time series given (including those for the Farnes and Skokholm) end with 2010, as do most of the graphed data. Where text has been imported from 1984, it has usually been edited to improve the prose style.

From the start of Chapter 1 (Puffins and auks), giving a description of the Puffin made in 1570, this has the feel of a completely new book rather than a second edition, and not just because the time elapsed has allowed data sets to lengthen. Long-term studies are detailed in the second chapter. The first indication of a changing environment for Puffins comes in Chapter 3 (Appearance, development and moult), with a 40-year decline in adult body weight at the start of and late in the breeding season on the Isle of May, a downward trend that is repeated elsewhere in the book for parameters such as fledging weight, breeding success, and adult survival. Whether the timing of primary moult in adults (in particular) has shifted recently from late winter to autumn (and if so in which populations) is dealt with in some detail, and needs further investigation.

Chapter 4 (Distribution and status in Britain, Ireland and France) benefits from the published results of the Seabird Colony Register and Seabird 2000 censuses, but also includes subsequent counts gleaned from JNCC's database (to 2009). A useful table summarises totals from the three censuses by region, and assesses probable changes post-Seabird 2000. Quite sensibly, figures for France have been added to the British Isles totals on biogeographic grounds, but an unfortunate slip of the calculator added only 57 instead of 257 to the Seabird 2000 total, an error that may persist in future citations.



Country accounts of distribution and status elsewhere (Chapter 5) supplied by local ornithologists vary from new (Sweden) or completely rewritten, to almost the same as in 1984, but with some estimates changed. I do not discount the difficulty of producing and labelling maps electronically, compared to using stencil and letraset, but the maps here lack some of their former detail, with some colonies referred to in the text not being indicated, or some important islands not being named; colony locations in the Gulf of St Lawrence have been omitted entirely.

The two chapters on Puffin breeding include an emphatic rejection of 'the chick desertion myth', and make extensive comparison of various parameters between colonies. Recent breeding failures, particularly in 2010, at

colonies in north Scotland, Faeroes, Iceland and west Norway are touched on, but this part of the Puffin story remains very much 'watch this space'. Kenny Taylor again wrote the chapter on behaviour, which includes a nicely expanded section on wheeling and its purposes, and the clarity of his prose matches those of the main authors. Most behaviour described is illustrated in the excellent selection of 44 colour plates, or in Keith Brockie's many vignettes, which are a delight throughout the book (the two portraits of the authors are priceless).

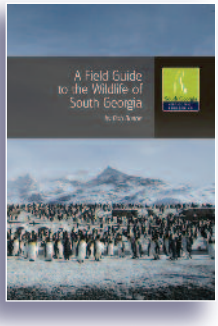
Attaching devices to Puffins has provided much new information on where and how breeding birds feed (Chapter 9). What they eat themselves rather than feed their chicks, and what birds feed on in winter is harder to determine, but recent studies in Canada using stable isotopes are described well. The value of maintaining long-term ringing programmes contributes to two really meaty chapters on survival, senescence, and inter-colony movements, and on where Puffins go in winter, the latter including tantalising results from the first few years of over-winter deployment of geolocators, including in Norway.

Man's relationship with Puffins (Chapter 13) has traditionally been one of exploitation, but new sections discuss benefits (to local economies) and potential costs (to Puffins) of tourism, and describe the success or otherwise of re-introduction attempts. Other (anthropogenic) threats to Puffins such as introduced mammals and invasive plants, chemical pollution, catastrophic and chronic oil pollution, and industrial fisheries are covered in Chapter 14, which points out the potential threat to a pelagic species from deepwater oil exploration and production, and suggests updated data on pollutant burdens of British Puffins is needed urgently.

The authors are to be congratulated on a thorough and comprehensive monograph, which is readable to the point of being un-put-down-able. Any glitches I spotted were trivial compared to what has been achieved. If I do have an issue with this book it is with Poyser's new layout. Narrow page margins and 13 cm long text lines in a very small font don't make for easy reading, especially in longer paragraphs; one wonders whether font size contributed to some typos going undetected at the final proof stage. In the 1984 book, long quotations were in a smaller font than the rest of the text, in slightly indented paragraphs, but here they are in the same font size and start within paragraphs, making it uncertain where they begin and end (e.g. p.170). Oddly, there is only one black and white photograph in all the 15 chapters, yet six chapters end with a page that is 50% or more blank, while five landscape photos of fieldworkers each occupy a whole page within the appendices, but sideways!

The final, short chapter (Overview and the future) pulls together the results of almost 40 years of research on the Isle of May, and looks to what the future might hold for its Puffins. In stark contrast to the conclusion in 1984, that "the general state of Puffindom is far better than at any time this century", the authors suggest that rising sea temperature and its effect on the food chain may make the area unsuitable for breeding, and that "seeing a thriving Puffin colony in 50–100 years time may involve travelling much further north than the Isle of May." This book should already be on the shelves of everyone with a serious interest in North Atlantic seabirds, while the clear writing style also makes it accessible to the lay public. I can think of no better Christmas present to stimulate the interest of a new generation of marine ornithologists.

Martin Heubeck



A Field Guide to the Wildlife of South Georgia Edited by Robert Burton. South Georgia Heritage Trust. 2012. ISBN 978-0-9564546-1-4. 200 pages, numerous colour photographs. Paperback, available from www.sght.org @ £17.95 + £3.95 p&p.

This field guide, dedicated specifically to the wildlife of South Georgia, is the first of its kind. It is an attractive book that manages to compress large amounts of information into a useful, carry-around sized guide that can be easily squeezed into the last little space in a full rucksack. It is packed with facts and information, interspersed with beautiful images of wildlife in and around South Georgia, and is an informative and pleasurable read for the novice and expert alike.

The book is clearly and simply laid out, starting with a short introductory section which gives the reader a basic understanding of the topography, climate, geology and history, leading on to the threats and challenges facing the biodiversity of South Georgia, and the conservation and habitat restoration efforts currently underway.

The main part of the book is an identification guide, divided into sections covering birds, seals, cetaceans, introduced mammals, invertebrates and plants, each being subdivided taxonomically. There is a standard layout from page to page, but with different taxa clearly indicated by a coloured top border to each page, allowing easy navigation around the book and enabling the reader to compare information between species. For those who already have sound ID skills, there is extra information on interesting aspects of species' ecology, such as the unique breeding cycle of the King Penguin *Aptenodytes patagonicus*, and the extensive variety of wildlife covered means that everyone will learn something from it.

The comprehensive birds section, approximately one third of the book, covers residents, breeders, migrants and vagrants, with a detailed description of each species and its call. Where two species appear confusingly similar, distinguishing features are identified and comparison photographs are often provided. High quality images help bring the descriptions to life and aid identification in the field. Where species are sexually dimorphic, or juveniles are distinctly different to adults, further descriptions or photographs are usually given. The distribution and behaviour of each species is described, further increasing its use as a field guide for the beginner, while a small section on its conservation status, population and threats to existence helps educate the reader about the species as well as enabling them to identify it. On the whole it is exceedingly well done, but in a few places a wider variety of images could have been chosen (for example two images of the Snowy Sheathbill *Chionis albus* are very similar, and one might have been replaced by a sheathbill in flight). One or two of the photos could be misleading for a beginner, such as the Kelp Gull *Larus dominicanus* image where the angle at which it is taken gives it a non-typical head shape and leg colour.

The seals and cetaceans sections have been produced with equal care and attention to detail. In addition to most of the above information, the best locations on South Georgia to see each seal species are given, which can be cross referenced to the useful map inside the front cover. Colour plates and drawings to allow size comparison between seal species might have been useful, but the photographs alone should allow correct identification. The photographs of cetaceans in many cases show only the back of the creature, which does not give a sense of scale, but this is useful for a field guide as this is usually all the visitor will see. For many species, inset photographs of the tail or head are also shown and are complemented by plates showing the size of each species. The plants section contains clear and easily recognisable photographs of higher and lower plants, both native and introduced, and the information about the origins of the introductions adds interest as it links the human history of these islands to their natural history. The lichens and invertebrates are equally well described and illustrated.

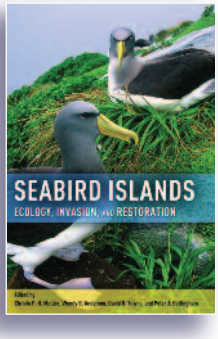
Most people visit South Georgia on a cruise that includes the Falkland Islands and/or the Antarctic Peninsula, and while other (larger and heavier) books may be required for other sections of the trip, the size, level of detail and usefulness of this guide means that for most people, it will be all that is required for this spectacular island group. All profits from its sale go to aid SGHT's conservation efforts in South Georgia so anyone purchasing it can be satisfied that they are contributing to the ongoing conservation of this magical group of islands. Having lived and worked with the wildlife of South Georgia and the South Orkneys for three years, I can honestly say this little book is well worth buying if you are planning a visit.

Stacey Adlard

The Bird Species. Systematics of the Bird Species and Subspecies of the World By Norbert Bahr. Media Natur-Verlag, Minden, Germany. 2011. ISBN 978-3-923757-11-4. 192 pages. In English & German. Hardback, Euros 24.95. Available from www.media-natur.de

The need for an authoritative and up-to-date list, defining species and subspecies, is fundamental to all the biological sciences and of course all branches of natural history. In the context of birds, both scientists and bird-watchers have, for many years, had a number of comprehensive works available to them. Between 1931 and 1957, Peters produced his 16 Volume *Checklist of Birds of the World*. This has been followed, and to some degree superseded, by checklists produced by Howard and Moore, and by Clements, volumes used especially by those birders who maintain a personal World list. More recently, digital lists have become available and of course within its sumptuous pages, the *Handbook of the Birds of the World* covers all known species. Now we have a new one to choose from - Norbert Bahr's *The Bird Species*.

This book (covering the Charadriiformes) represents the first volume of a series that will eventually cover all the bird species and subspecies in the World. It gives scientific and English names for each taxon and, for the first time in such a book, includes the current German name. It also includes brief distributional information on each taxon, as well as providing the type locality. This volume contains a short general introduction to the series, providing an overview of systematics, taxonomy and nomenclature, and a brief (seven paragraph) section outlining species concepts. The introduction, in both English and German, is followed by an introduction to the Charadriiformes, which primarily covers their phylogeny. The main part of the 192-page volume is then taken up with the species/subspecies list, within which each family is introduced with a summary of key taxonomic issues and references to important published work.



Should you buy this book? Answering 'yes' arguably implies a commitment to the whole series, so one needs to think beyond the volume reviewed here. How long the publication of the series will take and what the total costs might be are, as yet, unclear. Thus, it might take a long while for you to see the full list, and seeing it may end up representing a sizeable investment. The logic of publishing the list as multiple volumes is argued by the publishers to relate to the ease and rapidity of producing updates. Those choosing to invest in the series will no doubt be comforted by the fact that these updates will be made available to them. The volume on Charadriiformes is certainly progressive and up-to-date, and draws heavily on recent genetic work. In this context, gull enthusiasts will note that Short-billed (or Mew) Gull *Larus brachyrhynchus* is split from Common Gull *L. canus*, although rather than being accorded species status (as some may argue), *kamtschatschensis* is retained as a subspecies of *canus*. Siberian and Vega Gulls are treated as full species (*L. heuglini* and *L. vegae*, respectively). Interestingly, *barabensis* is treated as a subspecies of Siberian and *mongolicus* as a subspecies of Vega, an arrangement that differs appreciably from the most recent Gulls monograph (published in 2003). Amongst the waders, it is notable that *mongolicus* is treated as a subspecies of Lesser Sandplover *Charadrius mongolicus* rather than a full species, so the taxonomy does not always accord with some of the more recent popular birding press.

Overall, this is an impressive piece of work that deserves a place in well-resourced libraries and the bookshelves of professional ornithologists and scientists. Despite its undoubted merits, it is difficult to imagine that many birders will commit to investing in this series, given the likely pace of publication, the uncertain total cost and availability of alternative lists. As a single volume, the Charadriiformes will no doubt prove extremely useful for those with a specialist interest in this group of birds.

Chris Gibbins

Seabird Islands: ecology, invasion and restoration Edited by Christa P. H. Mulder, Wendy B. Anderson, David R. Towns and Peter J. Bellingham. Oxford University Press, New York. 2011. ISBN 978-0-19-973569-3. 492 pages, b/w photographs, numerous figures and tables. Hardback, £50.00.

It has long been a fundamental tenet of conservation knowledge that island species have been grievously affected by the introduction of invasive mammals. The image of hapless seabirds, lacking evolved defences and being decimated by cats and rats, is part of this sorry tale. In the past decade or two, the story has moved on in a big way. Firstly, the eradication of invasive mammalian predators from islands has grown from small beginnings to become a major conservation industry. Some of the most celebrated recent conservation success stories have come from such projects, for example the removal of Norway Rats *Rattus norvegicus* from Campbell Island in New Zealand, and feral pigs *Sus scrofa* from Santiago in the Galapagos. Due to astonishing advances in know-how, what was previously just a wistful aspiration to restore islands to their former glory has become reality for numerous and increasingly large islands. In parallel, we now understand how seabirds act as ecosystem engineers on islands, subsidising terrestrial systems with marine nutrients, and how their loss due to the introduction of predators has profound knock-on effects on island ecosystems.

When mammals eat seabirds, the consequent reduction in seabird numbers can be just the first step in an array of profound changes to the island and its biota. This research taps into two common themes in island ecology, that of islands as useful microcosms (or macrocosms) for ecosystem study more widely, because they are manageable,

simplified and (somewhat) self-contained systems, and that of islands as disproportionately important for global conservation.

This book draws together latest research on how seabirds engineer island ecosystems, and how seabird predators consequently affect islands. It examines latest theory and practice in the removal of non-native predators and restoration of species and ecosystems. It emerged from a 'Research Co-ordination Network' called 'Seabird Islands and Introduced Predators', funded by the US National Science Foundation. The network brought together a large number of leading researchers and practitioners from around the world, including those responsible for ground-breaking work in the Aleutian Islands, Gulf of California, Canary Islands and New Zealand. In all, there are 40 contributing authors, based in 10 countries. Each of the 13 chapters is authored by a different combination of network members.

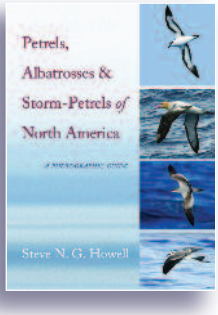
Three sections form a logical progression through the subject. Section one introduces the ecology of seabirds insofar as this leads to the phenomenon of 'seabird islands', on which nesting seabirds import marine nutrients and energy, and alter soil and vegetation, with consequent effects on the ecosystem. It then summarises what is known about the impact of invasive non-native predators on seabirds and on other species of seabird islands. These are largely review chapters, and although not especially novel they are invaluable in developing the ideas that go on to form the basis for what follows. The authors do attempt a couple of new analyses of meta-data that attempt to identify common patterns of impact among seabird predators, but these are poorly explained, not particularly illuminating and appear to be something of an afterthought.

The second section explores how seabirds influence island ecosystems, mainly through the use of comparative analyses within and between island archipelagos. This is where the idea of using a global network of researchers to build something greater than the sum of its parts comes into its own. Rather than getting research groups to write chapters about their own study systems (i.e. archipelagos), they organise the chapters thematically, and search for global patterns using a mixture of review, meta-analysis, and new analysis. This is done through numerous comparative statistical analyses using published and unpublished multi-island data to draw out patterns regarding how seabirds modify islands, and how these effects vary according to the number and type of seabirds present. The chapters here are presented paper-style in the sense of introduction-methods-results-discussion. However, the authors take the opportunity - rarely available in journals - to really poke around for patterns in the data, debate slightly speculative ideas, and present non-significant results. This is enjoyable stuff, although perhaps only for those with a considerable interest in the topic. Occasionally the lack of draconian editing results in a slightly indigestible number of graphs (34 in Chapter 6), but on the whole it remains readable and useful.

As the authors frequently comment, these analyses tend to emphasise the questions that arise, as much as the answers provided. These cross-system comparisons are inevitably limited by an ad-hoc, moderately small sample size, some variability in methods used, and by being purely correlational. However, combining these data-sets from across the world is still a considerable and novel feat, which really sets out the state of the art. A number of global generalities about the way in which seabirds affect soils, plants and other animals emerge, but there is frequently variation between systems; these are probably due to variations in climate, type and number of seabird, size and topography of islands, and this is where further research is needed to pin down the key factors. The next steps are more and more controlled comparisons, and designed experiments.

The main effects of seabirds on seabird islands - soil disturbance, vegetation trampling, nutrient input - are quite clear. However, these chapters show very clearly that all seabird islands are not the same; the manner in which seabirds act as engineers is determined by the type and number of seabirds, climate, history of use, etc. A chapter on how seabird islands affect aquatic (mainly inshore marine) habitats was a surprise and thought provoking, and highlighted the paucity of research on this topic. I also enjoyed discovering the effects nesting seabirds can have on microclimate: Wandering Albatrosses *Diomedea exulans* creating warmer and more regular temperatures around their nests, thereby increasing populations of flightless moths; petrel burrows on hot islands create mesic areas that can support elevated reptile populations.

The final chapter in this section - 'indirect effects of introduced predators on seabird islands' - seems a slightly odd fit with the others, which were about how seabirds affect islands, rather



than how seabird predators affect them. However, it is an elegant summary of how interspecific interactions that are common in nature - competition, apparent competition, intraguild predation, trophic cascades - play out on seabird islands when predators are introduced, creating fascinating if unwanted indirect effects on the ecosystem.

The third section examines the restoration of seabird islands, taking in turn the eradication of the predators, the restoration of species and ecosystems, and the social dimension. There is always a danger with such subject matter: it is not realistically possible to give meaningful practical advice about a subject of such complexity (and where the price of failure is so high) in one or two book chapters. Further, quasi-academic reviews of the factors that predict failure and success are usually facile, being unable to deal with the subtleties and singularities of each situation. However, these chapters steer a neat line between these pitfalls. They excellently summarise the state of conservation practice, drawing out key patterns and conclusions without attempting to be an instruction manual. The links between research and practical action are strongly and seamlessly made, which is a tribute to the authors and the network, since mutual incomprehension on each side of this dividing line continues to plague conservation. A final chapter synthesises the book, and rather neatly sets it in a broader context of seabird and island conservation during a period of global change.

This book is a powerful and interesting contribution to the conservation of seabird islands. It is academic without being esoteric. One would hope that such a strong author list of leading players (of the science and the practice) would create something pretty comprehensive, and indeed they seem to have missed very little. I particularly admire the logical development through the three sections; the successful merging of science and practice; and the way that, by working thematically across many island systems, the book becomes greater than the sum of its parts. It is not opulently produced; it is detailed, technical and not particularly beautiful. The relatively few photographs are black-and-white and not overly exciting, while the graphs are competent but not elegant. Don't buy it for your coffee table. But do buy it as an excellent account of how far we've come with seabird island conservation, and to get a glimpse of the possibilities for the future, if we can continue to combine research and action effectively, while bringing politicians and the public along with us.

Geoff Hilton

Petrels, Albatrosses and Storm-Petrels of North America: A photographic guide By Steve N. G. Howell. Princeton University Press, Princeton & Oxford. 2012. ISBN 978-0-6911421-1-1. 520 pages, 975 photographs and illustrations, 66 distribution maps. Hardback, £30.95.

This is the first book of its kind to cover all the all taxa of Procellariiformes recorded in North America (from Panama northwards). Unlike monographs, identification guides don't tend to be read from cover to cover and are perhaps more often delved into on an 'as and when required' basis, but opening this hefty book saw me reading the first 50 or so pages without taking a single reviewer's note - it was somewhat enthralling and I enjoyed reading it the second time (with pen and paper to hand) as much as I did the first!

These introductory chapters are well written and informative, covering the taxa, Ocean Habitats, Phylogeny, Biogeography and Vagrancy, Field Identification and Taxonomy. Given the upsurge in genetic studies within the taxa over recent years, it is perhaps not surprising that Howell does not follow AOU classification and he treats 70 species in full. In contrast, the AOU currently lists only 61 species for its recording area. Thus this title includes three 'Cory's' and six 'Manx' shearwaters, two 'Fea's' and two 'great-winged' petrels, three 'wandering' albatrosses, three 'band-rumped' and four 'Leach's' storm-petrels. The larger *Puffinus* shearwaters are treated in the genus *Ardenna* (Sooty *A. griseus*, Short-tailed Shearwater *A. tenuirostris*, Flesh-footed *A. carneipes*, Pink-footed *A. creatopus,* Buller's *A. bulleri*, Wedge-tailed Shearwater *A. pacificus* and Great Shearwater *A. gravis*) with *Puffinus* reserved for the smaller species (Audubon's *P. lherminieri*, Manx *Puffinus puffinus*, Barolo *P. baroli*, Newell's *P. newelli*, Townsend's *P. auricularis*, Black-vented Shearwater *P. opisthomelas*, Galapagos *P. subalaris* and Christmas Shearwater *P. nativitatis)*.

The chapter on 'Field Identification' covers a range of subjects including ageing, sexing, individual variation, flight, appearance and topography, and for me this is where the book gets really exciting. Diagrammatic representations of flight manners are used to good effect and are a great way of

explaining a species' flight actions according to wind speed and direction. Looking at the diagrams I can mentally see that Sooty Shearwater towers high and steeply in a strong wind compared to the more moderate flight of its close congener, Pink-footed Shearwater. The 'Environmental Factors' section describes at great length how light, temperature, viewing angle and distance to the subject affect perception and identification, and the use of digital photography to illustrate this (sometimes depicting the same bird in differing light conditions) has been used to good effect.

The bulk of the book comprises the accounts for 70 species, geared primarily towards field identification and separation from other species. Readers of this review will know all to well that the species dealt with are one of the toughest groups of birds to identify, not only because of their similarities with each other, but because of the difficult (if not extreme) conditions one generally tends to observe them under and for such a short time. Howell obviously recognises this and presents clear, concise, and sometimes evocative key identification features and pitfalls; I do not know of a field guide that goes to such great length and detail.

Each species has a section covering identification summary, taxonomy, status and distribution, field identification, a detailed description, and a section on moult. Distribution maps are included for all regularly occurring species and cover the whole breeding range (or island), migration routes, and moulting areas. Patterns of seasonal occurrence are also given, an extremely useful and thoughtful inclusion.

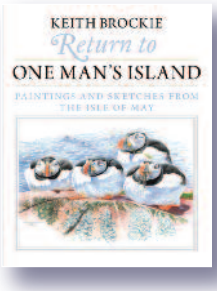
So what of the photographs? Each species (except Townsend's Shearwater which is illustrated in a plate by Ian Lewington) averages 10–15 photographs but many have more (Northern Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis* has 27) and many have less (Zino's Petrel *Pterodroma madeira* has five). The quality of the images is generally excellent and preference has clearly been given to photos that illustrate identification criteria rather than aesthetic portraits - this is an identification guide after all. Birds are shown as you are likely to see them in the field, and in many cases alongside similar or potential confusion species. Most species are depicted in differing angles and light, and the inclusion of birds in active moult is very welcome. In many cases, similar species are often depicted together on the same page as a series of individual photographs - e.g. the Atlantic gadfly petrels - which is also most useful. Each photograph includes a caption detailing the identification pointer being illustrated, which saves one having to refer back to the main species accounts time and again.

A few of the images are reproduced very small and in these instances I would have perhaps liked to have seen them merged onto a digitally created background to highlight the more subtle identification features a littler better - looking for those white bases to the outer primary shafts on a Swinhoe's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma monorhis* would be so much easier - but I guess they are hard to see in the field so why should they be easier to see in a book?

I must confess to once being incredibly sceptical about photographic guides and their use for bird identification, as over the years I have collected a number of books that have promised so much and not delivered. Digital photography equipment and reproduction software have improved dramatically in the last five years and I can honestly say this book has not only changed my mind about photographic guides, I believe it sets a benchmark and standard that other titles and authors should follow. This is an outstanding work and should sit on the bookshelf of every keen sea-watcher. Although clearly targeted at a North American audience, in a Western Palaearctic context it is also a 'must have' as I am not aware of any other book that covers the 14 species likely to be seen in the region in so much detail. So whether you are off to Madeira or Massachusetts, take this book with you. A paperback version will hopefully follow (for easier portability) and the title is also available digitally via Amazon's Kindle but sadly not via Apple's iBooks. At £30.95 it represents excellent value for money, and is thoroughly recommended. Dramamine to the ready...

Hugh Harrop

Return to One Man's Island – Paintings and Sketches from The Isle of May By Keith Brockie. Birlinn, Edinburgh. 2012. ISBN 978-1-84158-974-9. 175 pages. 137 pages of sketches and paintings and approximately 38 pages of text, colour photographs, tables and graphs. Hardback. £25.00.



This book is an update of Keith Brockie's hugely successful book of paintings and sketches from the Isle of May, *One Man's Island*, which was published in 1984. Almost thirty years later Keith returned to the island in the Firth of Forth on the east coast of Scotland to work intensively for several months on new paintings and drawings of

the island and its plants and wildlife. *Return to One Man's Island* is the result. Here Keith records the changes that have taken place on the island and in the populations of birds and mammals that live or breed there. The book is primarily a collection of his exquisite full colour paintings and sketches, enhanced by text and colour photographs of the island, and of Keith at work.

Return to One Man's Island follows the same format as the first book with four chapters – 'Breeding Birds', 'Other Wildlife', 'Migration' and 'Grey Seals'. Each chapter contains some explanatory text but the main focus is on the sketches and paintings which, with Keith's meticulous attention to detail, recreate the true sense of the island's beauty and variety of wildlife. Much of the artwork is also enhanced by some inset explanatory text. This is not by any means a scientific publication, nor is it intended to be, but any seabird worker could not fail to appreciate the artwork contained within its pages.

The introduction sets the scene and gives some background information on the history of the island and its present status as a National Nature Reserve, incorporating both a research station and a Bird Observatory and serving as a popular day trip destination from the Fife coast. There is also some interesting technical information about Keith's painting and sketching materials and working methods.

Chapter one deals with the island's breeding birds. There is a lot of factual information here with figures and dates relating to changes in the bird, mainly seabird, populations. Keith's style is very readable and entertaining, as he includes amusing personal observations and anecdotes on the antics of gulls and other birds. The paintings and drawings in this chapter aptly show how Keith's style has matured and developed in the intervening years since his first book on the May was published. If anything, his style has become more artistic and striking while losing none of the accuracy that has always been his forte, although the chestnut heads of his Razorbills *Alca torda* certainly made me think more about what I am looking at in the field. The second chapter, 'Other Wildlife', is shorter than the first but follows the same format of paintings and text personalised by anecdotes and notes on the illustrations. There is a stunning double page painting of a lobster, and one of three porpoises swimming with a backdrop of the entire length of the island behind them.

Chapters three and four follow the same pattern and 'Migration' will be of particular interest to twitchers, showing the island's importance to migrating birds and the significance of its position at the mouth of the Firth of Forth. The wide variety of species found can be seen by the Observatory log entries reproduced here. There is also a personal account of the ill-fated White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* which could not be saved despite the best of intentions. The last chapter 'Grey Seals' highlights the island's importance as a breeding ground for these mammals. Here also there is some text with useful background information and diagrams and a graph to add detail to the beautiful paintings of Grey Seals *Halichoerus grypus* and their pups.

Return to One Man's Island is a welcome addition to the first book and complements that work, while detailing the changes and developments on the Isle of May over the past thirty years. The new artwork is stunning and makes this book well worth having regardless of ownership of the first one. The use of a white background as opposed to the coloured pages in the first book is also an improvement in my view. The paintings and photographs are beautifully reproduced and do not appear to have lost any of their clarity and sharpness during the printing process. In this book Keith Brockie has shown that his paintings are equally impressive whether his subjects are birds, mammals, butterflies or crustaceans.

This is a book which should appeal to a wide readership whether one's interest is in natural history, art or Scottish islands. The publication date in November should solve a few Christmas present problems as well! At less than 20 pence per page of painting it is pretty good value. This book is a very impressive achievement and shows Keith's artistic genius and virtuosity to perfection.

Alan Leitch