

The Complete Guide to Finding the Birds of Australia

by Richard Thomas, Sarah Thomas, David Andrew and Alan McBride

Publisher: CSIRO Publishing Australia, 2 edn, 2011. 463 pages, paperback, black and white maps, colour and black and white plates.
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This new edition of the well known guide to finding Australian birds has been much anticipated by birdos in Australia and overseas.

The authors state (page x) that the book is '... intended to help both resident and visiting birders to find as wide a range of bird species as possible in Australia and its territories.' And we think it certainly meets this goal. One of the reviewers (MOB) has not travelled as widely in Australia but found the entries for unfamiliar locations succinct and informative.

The authors would be familiar to most Australian birdos and are eminently qualified to compile this book.

The book is reasonably well designed and laid out with the contents page indicating the states and territories of Australia as well as islands and pelagic birding, followed by a 'bird Finder Guide' (section starting on page 199). This section is well referenced back to the 'States and territories' locality sections so the two methods of finding birds are linked together for the reader.

The book appears to be up to date with current avian taxonomy. For example the White-lined Honeyeater split to give us the Kimberley Honeyeater is there as are suggestions that the Thick-billed Grasswren may be split in future for the western and eastern groups. The use of maps and photographs helps break up the otherwise long sections of text.

Those considering purchasing the book might like to check a section that is familiar to them and see how well the book addresses the area.

Based on our knowledge of many of the areas covered, the book does a reasonable job of helping the reader to find birds. However, Australia is a big place and a particular bird species may be found in many places, so the book only covers areas where birds may generally be reliably found or where the authors have specific

knowledge. However, as most birdos would know, even 'reliable birding places' do not guarantee success so one needs to have some knowledge of possible options other than the ones given in this guide.

Appendix D provides additional information of a more general kind—for example trip planning and travel advice etc. It was surprising to find that the section on Field Guides (p. 418) did not include Birds Australia's *The New Atlas of Australian Birds* (this book may be mentioned elsewhere in the text however we did not find it). In our experience the *New Atlas* is the most helpful book we know of for finding birds in Australia. One can use the Atlas first by finding areas where a species has been recorded and then checking on recorded habitat requirements (via field guides etc.) and any other more specific information for a species, for example local or regional guides, bird trail maps or birds lists for a locality. One can then work out where along a planned route (or area) a subject species might be found. Hence, for anyone wanting to find birds in Australia we would be recommending they also obtain a copy of the *Atlas* or go on line to check the Birds Australia Bird Data database.

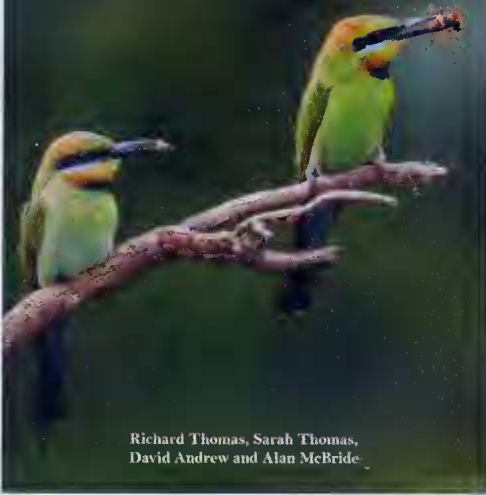
The numerous 'mud maps' sprinkled through the text showing birding locations are simple but useful and help orient the reader and support the text. However, good local and detailed maps would usually be required to find many bird locations as the maps in the book are not detailed enough (the authors point this out in the book).

The book may not be much help if you are planning on visiting a specific area and are looking for local information, unless the book just happens to cover the area you are visiting. Even then the book covers only target birds and not the other species you may come across

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SECOND EDITION



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in the area. For example we purchased a copy thinking it would help with a trip to north-east NSW/south-east Qld. However, we found that this bird-rich area with a large human population and many visitors was not generally covered. However, our target area (Bowra Station) was covered but only to a limited extent. To be fair, the authors do mention that ‘... this book

is not designed as a comprehensive site guide ...’ and that they ‘... have made judgements as to where to find as many of Australia’s birds as possible in the most efficient way’ (page x).

In these days of internet access to the various state ‘BirdLine’ websites, birding chatlist (Birding-Aus), interactive eBooks (e.g. Michael Morecombe’s Field Guide) and access to detailed topographic maps via hand-held GPS devices, birding guide books have plenty of ‘competition’ in attracting the attention of the birding fraternity, especially those visiting Australia to find birds.

However, this is a very useful book to all levels of interested naturalists and makes a valuable addition to one’s ‘birding kit’ (along with the other resource tools and research mentioned above). In addition to a number of recent and excellent regional guides (e.g. *Where to see Birds in Victoria*, Birds Australia 2009), this nationwide book is worth purchasing by all birdos.

The guide is a welcome and long-awaited addition to the increasing information available to birdos in Australia and we can heartily recommend it as reference material for both visitors to Australia and to anyone heading to a new location.

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One hundred and twenty-eight years ago

THE PROTECTION OF OUR NATIVE BIRDS

BY A.J. CAMPBELL

(Read before the field Naturalists’ Club of Victoria, 9th Feb., 1885)

... There is a circumstance that greatly interferes with our birds, and to which they do not appear, like the birds of Europe or America, to be able to adapt themselves, viz., the alteration of the physical features of the country by the advance of civilization and cultivation. Then there is the havoc made with indigenous forests—their natural resorts. Our Land Administrators seem to alienate our valuable timber lands without framing the slightest regulation against their wanton waste. Another instance, the reclamation of many swamps cannot but seriously affect numerous members of the aquatic tribe, by demolishing their native haunts.

Rabbits over-run large tracts of our colony. Various modes are adapted for their destruction—one extensively used is poisoned grain, which is often taken by some of our beautiful birds. Therefore, it would appear, taking all things into consideration, our birds have a hard struggle for existence ...

From *The Victorian Naturalist* I, p. 124, December 1884