

## News and notices

### BOOK REVIEWS

CRESSWELL G. & WALKER D. 2001. *Whales & Dolphins of the European Atlantic, the Bay of Biscay and the English Channel*. Ocean Guides, Wild Guides Ltd, Old Basing. Price £ 8,=, 56pp, semi-hardback.

There is a new book, with an old title: Whales & Dolphins, how many books carry that name? But this, this is different. Here we have an incredible must-have for anyone sailing the North Atlantic every once in a while and for anyone with an interest in cetaceans. It is handy and small, it is informative and authoritative, it is glossy and colourful, it is a breakthrough using modern digital artwork, it is an extraordinary collection of photographs at the same time and, oh wonder, it's cheap too! Just buy this little identification guide, you will never regret it and you support this young organisation manning Bay of Biscay ferries with skilled observers, collecting highly valuable data. Don't hesitate, ignore the rest of this review for my sake, but make sure you place the order.

With nearly a metre of cetacean field guides on my bookshelf, I was never able to pick my choice when I went to sea again, being arrogant enough to know better than what was depicted or what was described. Photo collections were always incomplete, or better examples should have been chosen. Images showed the entire beast rather than what was actually visible 'in the field'. As a tourist guide, you had to hold your hand over 90% of the image to try and explain what was to be seen and how it looked in real life. Graeme Cresswell and Dylan Walker must have had the same experience, but better still, they did solve the problem by producing the ultimate little guide for their working area! With pages of photo's facing text pages, they did not accept the problem of having to pick one picture out of a selection to show what they wished to show. Instead, they manipulated the available images to such an extend that you now have for example "a pod" of blue whales at the surface, with all individuals in a different and highly informative pose: blowing, showing blowhole, showing the back, from the side and from an angle, and lobtailing. No suitable shot of Pygmy Sperm Whale available? Just make one! A shot of some calm sea, a little artwork implanted and there we are: perfectly comparable with a genuine shot of the Dwarf Sperm Whale in the same pose on the same page! I have only one wish, Graeme and Dylan: do give us the entire North Atlantic in a guide, including the (sub-)tropical whales and dolphins and with the Narwhal and Beluga. I can not wait to buy that one!!

*Kees Camphuysen*

YÉSOU, P. & SULTANA, J. 2000. *Monitoring and Conservation of Birds, Mammals and Sea Turtles of the Mediterranean and Black Seas. Proceeding of the 5<sup>th</sup> Medmaravis Symposium, Gozo, Malta*. Environment Protection Department, Malta. 320 pages. ISBN 99909-65-03-X. Price £20 or US\$30 including p&p. Available from Birdlife Malta, 57/28 Marina Court, Abate Rigor Street, Ta' Xbiex MSD 11, Malta.

This volume contains a review of the legal protection given to Mediterranean and Black Sea seabirds, mammals and turtles, 13 papers on seabird distribution and biology, eight on seabird study techniques, six on important sites for seabirds, and 10 on sea turtles or marine mammals. All papers refer to populations or sites in the Mediterranean Sea or the Black Sea. The book can therefore be recommended to anyone interested in the seabirds, mammals or turtles of these regions as an important source of up to date information on status and biology. Several of the papers review knowledge of the rare endemic species of the region such as the Balearic Shearwater *Puffinus mauretanicus*, a species reduced to about 3000 breeding pairs, of which 75% nest on Formentera. Unlike most shearwaters, this species feeds extensively on fishery discards. In common with many other shearwaters, it is threatened by introduced alien mammals, loss of nesting habitat, oil pollution, long-line by-catch and possibly by overexploitation of clupeid stocks. Threats to the Great White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus*, Dalmatian Pelican *Pelecanus crispus*, Pygmy Cormorant *Phalacrocorax pygmeus*, Armenian Gull *Larus armenicus*, Audouin's Gull *L. audouinii*, Mediterranean Gull *L. melanocephalus*, Slender-billed Gull *L. genei*, and Gull-billed Tern *Sterna nilotica*, and the population status of these species are reviewed in a series of chapters that complete the first, and largest, part of the book. There then follows a variety of techniques-based chapters, including studies of Mediterranean seabird distributions at sea, studies based on data loggers, and Mediterranean shearwater phylogeny based on mitochondrial DNA sequences. Sections on seabird sites and on turtles and marine mammals provide an eclectic range of papers, with information on many sites that will be little known to most Seabird Group members, but provide some mouth-watering facts and figures, such as the Audouin's Gull colony that also holds 37 breeding pairs of Eleonora's Falcon *Falco eleonora* on only 40 ha of islands some 12 km from the mainland coast, despite the islands' being "continually disturbed [by] large numbers of tourists"!

I strongly encourage anyone interested in Mediterranean or Black Sea seabirds to buy this book. It contains a wealth of information on status, distribution and biology, with particular reference to threats and conservation action.

Bob Furness