

1919-11-12

Westerskov, Kaj Ejvind

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KAJ EJVIND WESTERSKOV, FLS (1919-2003)

Professor Kaj Westerskov was a leading ornithologist, first in Denmark, where he was born, and latterly in New Zealand, where he was successively a PhD student at Victoria University College, Reader in Zoology at the University of Otago and subsequently Professor there. He published his first book (on the black grouse) when he was 22; subsequently he published extensively on New Zealand birds; as an academic he introduced partridge into New Zealand. He set up world-renowned programmes at Otago University in wildlife management.

He is survived by his wife, Kirsten, who shared some of his underground ornithological experiences in Denmark.

Know your New Zealand Birds

by K. E. Westerskov.

Whitcombe and Tombs Ltd., Christchurch, 1967. \$2.25.

Kaj Westerskov, Biologist, Reader in Zoology and perhaps above all a family man, has set out to write a compact, lucid book on field identification of New Zealand birds, so that the amateur may share with the expert the pleasures of bird watching and identification.

The author's two oldest children, a senior scout and guide respectively, probably helped stimulate him to compile this excellent book.

The first paragraph of the preface sets out the book's aim—it is a guide to New Zealand birds for young people, guides and scouts, students, trampers, shooters, campers, immigrants, overseas visitors and budding bird watchers. This aim it will achieve—it requires little refinement and thus leaves little room for criticism. However, it does fall short of its aim to be a pocket guide—nobody could comfortably sit on it and it would require an extremely generous pocket anywhere to accommodate it. If it was paper-backed rather than hard-backed it would then conform to pocket requirements.

There are four different ways for bird identification. (1) the index and (2) the quick reference are useful for those with a good idea as to what bird they are looking at. But the next two sections, (3) the field key page 166 and (4) identification by habitat, with ten habitat types listed, are ideal for the novice. In other words these sections will go close to permitting “anyone” to identify their birds down to species.

There are sections on sex and age determination, song tracks, birds found on roadsides, dead on beaches, game birds, bird journals and organisations etc.

The bibliography is ideally selected. There are 16 colour plates taken from Buller's Birds of New Zealand, and 75 photographs, some of which have not reproduced well, e.g. the sooty and fluttering shearwaters, the spotted shags and the pukeko. I am sure these

could have been improved on, had the author used photographs taken by others, rather than remain restricted to his own collection, good as it is.

Overall, the amount of information packed into 143 pages is astounding and the manner of presentation excellent, making the book worthy of success.