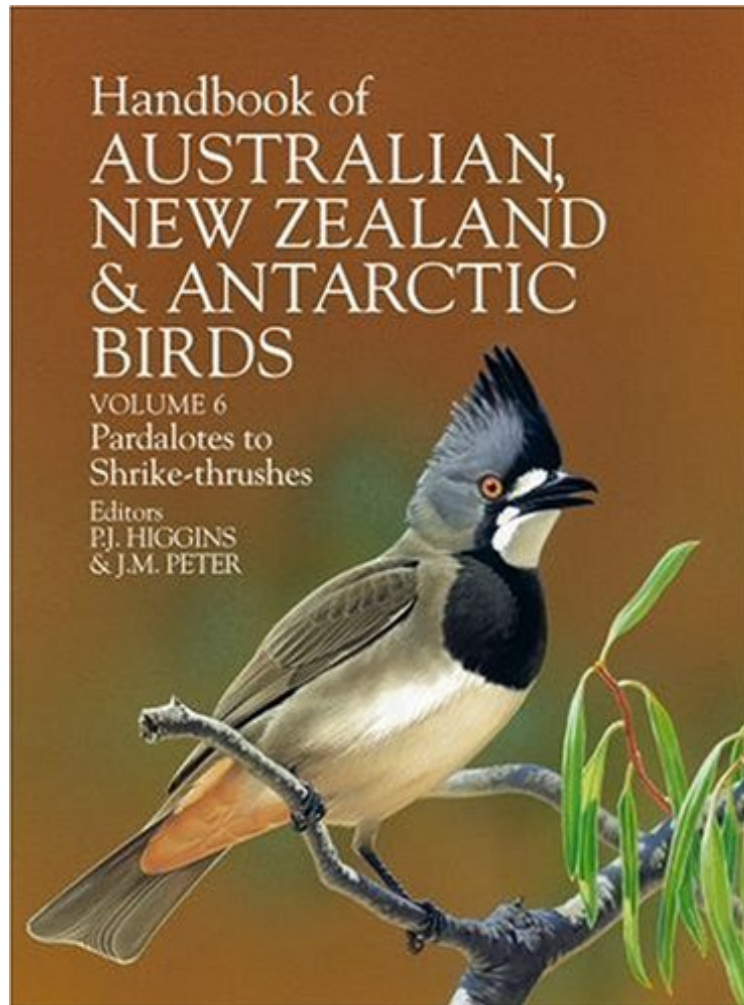


Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds: Volume 6: Pardalotes to Shrike-trushes

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From Oxford University Press : Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds: Volume 6: Pardalotes to Shrike-trushes before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds: Volume 6: Pardalotes to Shrike-trushes:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Essential to understand ornithology as it really isBy mianfeiAlthough music less well-known than the Handbook of the Birds of the World series, the Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds is both a very valuable supplement to that series and a very important resource of its own accord. This is because Australia is by far the closest extant continent to geological normalcy of impoverished low-nutrient soils, ancient, flat terrain and warm climates. The soils of other present-day continents can

be shown by a limited, temporarily biased paleopedological record to be extreme flukes, with contents of phosphorus and chalcophile elements like zinc, copper and selenium geologically as rare as people seven feet tall amongst today's human population. New Zealand and New Guinea, though in some ways very typical Enriched lands, do share Australia's chalcophile element deficiencies owing to a geology of acid volcanics. They can be quite interesting for this and potentially other more climatic reasons though not nearly so much as Australia. This sixth of seven volumes in Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds is the most important of all because it covers most of the old endemic passerine families in which the unique lifestyles of Australian birds are concentrated. Such families as Neosittidae and Corcoracidae, faced with foraging in extremely hard timber or soil of high bulk density due to the absence of nutrients taken for granted elsewhere in today's Earth, must live in highly complex societies simply to survive. It is impossible for sitta or mudnester pairs to find enough food for their young to raise even a single nestling, so that non-breeding adults must do a large proportion of the labour to raise two or three nestlings over an extremely extended period of parental care. A Varied Sittella nestling can (by my own calculations) require twenty times as many bird-hours to reach independence as similar-sized Enriched World nestlings. Even species with less demanding foraging niches and lacking obligate cooperation can be seen in this sixth volume of Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds to require much more labour than Enriched World species of roughly equivalent ecological niches. Once one can grasp these differences, Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds becomes a much more valuable read than the mass of dry data would seem to make it on first impression. The series does not have that many actual pictures of birds it is much more purely a reference series than the Handbook of the Birds of the World but the quality of its descriptions, which are written in language that is not tough for a layman to understand, more than makes up for this. The details given of each species within Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds are exceptional in fact superior to those given in the corresponding Handbook of the Birds of the World chapters. Exact and precise clutch sizes, details of frequency of cooperation amongst the large number of facultative (frequent but not obligate) cooperative breeding species, and highly detailed accounts of nest success and failure are not matched by the international equivalent ornithological handbook. There are also greater details of sizes and masses of each bird species found in Australia, surrounding islands and New Zealand than in any other reference work. The details of social organisation are particularly detailed, covering not only breeding but also non-breeding birds during poorer years of secondary productivity so low no young can be reared even cooperatively, along with much more banding details than the simple longevity and movement records found in Handbook of the Birds of the World. There are also many and surprising details of diet and ecology of these species for example even experts may not know how White-Winged Choughs, among the most Australian of birds, are known to forage in shallow creeks for molluscs and the precise statistics become informing rather than boring upon repeated readings. All in all, this sixth volume, Pardalotes to Shrike-Thrushes is a rare and expensive but exceedingly valuable ornithological work both encyclopedia and basic textbook of an avian world much closer to most of geological history than where almost all ornithologists learned their profession.

The Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds (or HANZAB, for short) is one of the world's major ornithological projects. This is the sixth of a seven-volume encyclopedia which, when complete, will provide a comprehensive summary of the biology together with detailed illustrations of all 952 species of birds which occur in Australia, New Zealand, and Antarctica. Thus the work covers a significant proportion of the Earth's surface and will describe in unsurpassed detail some 10% of all known bird species.