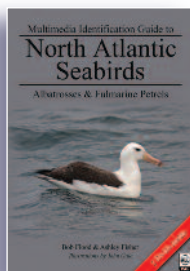


REVIEWS



Multimedia Identification Guide to North Atlantic Seabirds: Albatrosses and Fulmarine Petrels By Bob Flood and Ashley Fisher. Illustrated by John Gale. Scilly Pelagics. 2016. ISBN 978-0-956-88672-9. 278 pages, 200+ colour photos, 180+ colour illustrations and maps, includes 2 DVDs. Hardback, £39.99.

Albatrosses and Fulmarine Petrels is the third volume by Bob Flood and Ashley Fisher dedicated to the identification of North Atlantic tubenoses. Its predecessors have been comprehensive and beautifully illustrated guides to some of the most challenging and exciting species, with a thorough study of the Pterodromas proving particularly useful. This guide explores 11 species, six of which are yet to be accepted as having occurred in the North Atlantic and a further two of which have occurred on just a couple of occasions. Thus, after Atlantic Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis*, Black-browed *Thalassarche melanophris* and Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatrosses *Thalassarche chlororhynchos* are the most likely species to be encountered that are tackled by this volume (with fewer than 200 accepted records combined). This is no surprise given that most of the species covered have evolved to use the windy conditions prevalent in the southern oceans to allow long-distance flight despite their bulk; the calmer central Atlantic is thus a very real barrier to regular vagrancy. Over 270 pages and two DVDs are dedicated to the aging and identification of the 11 species at sea.

The guide comprises six main sections; a brief introduction to their biology including

moult and how this relates to aging in the field, the beautifully illustrated species accounts which cover identification and aging, a look at 'confusion pairs', a brief appendices looking at potential vagrancy in Pacific Fulmar and aberrant plumages in Atlantic Fulmar, an 'ID jogger' (a text only, 'print out and take' Nils Van Duivendijk-esque identification guide) and two DVDs (which follow the same basic pattern as the book). John Gale's plates portray every known plumage and morph and are well supported with an ample selection of excellent photographs. The majority of the photos come from the southern oceans where these species are readily attracted to chumming boats and fishing vessels, allowing for exceptionally close views; thus the details of bill colouration, relevant in all of the species covered and a key identification feature in several, can be seen well.

The two DVDs are included to provide a guide to jizz and the challenge of identification in field conditions. Although these include a comprehensive range of footage, and very much capture the challenges of viewing from a moving boat, it would have been advantageous to see the inclusion of more stills taken at the same time. For example, a giant petrel that was unidentified on the DVD may well have been distinguished by a photographer focused on the same bird. Likewise several of the video clips where subtle or hard to see features were evident would have benefited from a still to allow for prolonged views. However, this is only a minor issue, which can to some degree be compensated for by watching the DVDs with the book in one hand and the pause button in the other.

This becomes the most comprehensive guide covering the field identification of these 11 species. Although the need to reference it will only ever arise for the very lucky few, a thorough exploration of this

volume will leave the reader well equipped should they find themselves enjoying such rare birds in the North Atlantic.

Richard Brown

Project Puffin: The Improbable Quest to Bring a Beloved Seabird Back to Egg Rock
By Stephen W. Kress and Derrick Z. Jackson. Yale University Press, New Haven and London. 2015. ISBN 978-0-300-20481-0. xvi + 357 pages, 30 black-and-white, 11 colour plates. Hardback, £20.00.

This compelling account of perseverance against formidable odds to restore a long abandoned colony of Atlantic Puffins *Fratercula arctica* on a tiny island off the USA's Maine coast is at once a page-turning tale of derring-do and an inspiration to attempts around the world to raise other phoenixes from the ashes of man's wholesale extirpations of seabirds from islands. While Steve Kress is the chief architect of 'Project Puffin', he is ably supported by Derrick Jackson's background research, interviews and photography.

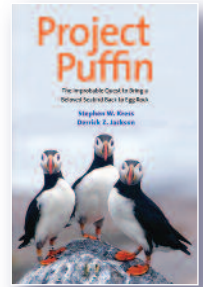
The first part of the narrative charts the flowering of Kress's passion for natural history, leading to the main course - a chronological account of the quest to re-establish Puffins on Eastern Egg Rock Island. The global export of a ground-breaking toolkit is then explored, and the book concludes by reflecting on 'stewardship' of nature as a prerequisite for combating the greatest challenge of our time: a world on the brink of its sixth mass extinction.

Kress grew up in Bexley, Ohio, in the mid 1950s 'when families let fourth-graders romp from house to house and disappear for hours in forested parks.' He immersed himself in looking after amphibians and reptiles, experimented with fish, and displayed the tenacity, practical flair and

attention to detail that would define his life's work. As a birdlife instructor at Hog Island Audubon Camp in Maine, his epiphany was the discovery in Ralph Palmer's *Maine Birds* (1949) that prior to 1860 Puffins had bred on Western and Eastern Egg Rocks before being shot to extinction.

Eschewing the received wisdom to 'let nature take its course', and inspired by Cornell's post-DDT Peregrine *Falco peregrinus* chick-rearing programme, Kress hatched a relocation plan to restore Puffins to one of Maine's Egg Rocks. The revelation in Ronald Lockley's *Puffins* (1953) that chicks were independent at fledging encouraged Kress's vision that they could be hand-reared, but convincing others was harder. Palmer stunned Kress by dismissing his ambition as a 'stunt', opining that he should go to Iceland if he wanted to see Puffins. But Kress found a crucial ally in Bill Drury who upheld man's right to 'play God' where he had undermined nature's order. Drury then helped win over an initially sceptical David Nettleship to assist Kress, and so in 1973 began the baby steps of translocating six Puffin chicks by air from Great Island (Newfoundland) to Maine for hand-rearing. In August, after 'an enormous amount of effort and error, and no small amount of dumb luck', five Puffin chicks fledged from Eastern Egg Rock, the first of nearly 2000 that, with Nettleship's vital support, would be imported from Newfoundland to Maine in successive seasons.

Overcoming the trials and tribulations of Puffin-rearing makes the translocation years read like a thriller: Kress and his team of youthful 'puffineers' had to deal with subtropical storms, dubious health and



safety on boats (including a near disaster with Roger Tory Peterson), burrow hygiene, feather lice, and — most insidious of all — gull predation. Four years in, Kress feared that unless any of the ringed immatures returned to Eastern Egg Rock, support for the programme would rapidly dwindle. Concern that potential returnees would also find an island barren of Puffins unappealing was the genesis of 'social attraction' (unprecedented in seabird conservation) using painted wooden decoys, a ploy Kress borrowed from Icelandic hunters. In 1975 a Puffin translocated as a chick landed among the decoys, the first recorded on Eastern Egg Rock in almost 100 years. In 1981 an ecstatic yell of 'Puffin... with fish!!!' were 'the most important words' of Kress's career. Never before had a breeding seabird been restored to an island where humans had wiped it out. Project Puffin went on to restore more than 1,000 pairs of Puffins to three Maine islands, and (with the help of tern decoys) also generated Maine's largest colony of Roseate Terns *Sterna dougallii*.

The programme's legacy has since extended far beyond the shores of Maine, its innovative techniques being applied to 128 restoration projects in 14 countries, benefiting 47 species. Some of the most celebrated case studies are highlighted: Galapagos Petrel *Pterodroma phaeopygia*, Bermuda Petrel *P. cahow*, Short-tailed Albatross *Phoebastria albatrus*, Common Murre *Uria aalge*, Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia* and Chinese Crested Tern *Thalasseus bernsteini*. From all these interventions we now know much more about the efficacy of social attraction; broadcasting calls can reinforce visual cues, and social attraction works better for some seabird species than others.

Kress and Jackson, however, disabuse any perception of restoration as a quick fix. Rather they call for continuous stewardship to sustain seabird populations in the face of mounting environmental threats, above all climate change. That the Atlantic Puffin has been Red Listed by the IUCN since this book was published reinforces that message. The authors invoke the recent analysis that one-

third of forage fish should be left in the sea to sustain seabird productivity, and cite the long slow decline in body weight of Machias Seal Island Puffins increasingly deprived of their staple Herring *Clupea harengus*. The authors compare this to the food shortages experienced by Puffins in Europe and particularly Iceland, although it is too prescriptive to say (p.281) this is 'because sand lance [sandeels]... have moved too far from the nesting habitat in response to warmer water'. It's more likely a function of overall sandeel abundance than sandeel displacement as such.

In a series of powerful interviews with selected puffineers, the final chapter pays homage to the 500+ interns who over 40 years have served as field assistants on Eastern Egg Rock and who embraced and replicated the lessons of 'Project Puffin' in their subsequent lives. The authors' deeper message, echoing Kress's own childhood, is that what first fired and unites these youngsters was a connectedness to nature forged as children, a wellspring at growing risk of running dry in our indoors, digitally dominated society.

'Project Puffin' is testimony to the enormous effort it takes to reassemble a lost seabird colony and the even greater challenge of sustaining it. This is a profoundly important book. Charmingly written, full of insight and wisdom, it amounts to a battle hymn for conservation.

Euan Dunn

Reclaiming South Georgia: The defeat of furry invaders on a sub-Antarctic island

By Tony Martin, with photographs by members of Team Rat. South Georgia Heritage Trust Publishing, Dundee. 2015. ISBN 978-0-9564546-3-8. 144 pages, numerous colour photographs. Hardback, £25.00.

Introduced mammalian predators pose one of the biggest threats to populations of ground- and burrow-nesting seabirds. Nowhere has this been more evident than South Georgia where the once vast populations of petrels and prions, not to mention those of the endemic duck and pipit, have been decimated by the rats and mice brought in by the huge sealing and whaling industries that flourished well into living memory. In 2005, a few enlightened and dynamic people formed the South Georgia Heritage Trust (SGHT). One of the aims of the SGHT was to remove rodents from this remote and inhospitable archipelago. Until recently such a venture would have been unthinkable but pioneering work by New Zealanders showed that with modern rodenticides and high-tech baiting methods, rats and mice could be successfully eradicated from relatively large, remote islands such as Campbell and Macquarie.

Following support and serious money from several benefactors and Foundations, in 2007 SGHT made the decision to start the eradication. In some ways this was a 'now or never project' since the glaciers that split the non-ice covered parts of South Georgia into several admittedly enormous subareas, each of which might be treated with rodenticides, were retreating rapidly due to climate change. Once these glaciers no longer reached the coast, rodents would be able to move freely between subareas making their eradication impractical. Thus was born probably the most ambitious conservation project ever attempted.

This book chronicles the epic endeavour by the project's director Tony Martin and Team Rat to use helicopters to distribute poisoned

bait in every square metre of the 1,070 km² of ice-free terrain on South Georgia. The operational details are awesome: three gruelling field seasons, 1,050 helicopter hours flown by three helicopters covering a distance equivalent to 3 times around the world, 300 tonnes of bait distributed, 899 drums of fuel used, 10,700 meals prepared and 10,000 tea bags used. The list omits to record the number of cases of champagne drunk to celebrate various milestones along the way or bottles of gin needed when the expedition's future seemed in jeopardy.

To quote from the preface: "This book tells the story, in words and pictures, of the freeing of the island from its rodent tyranny. It is a story of highs and lows, excitement and frustration, fear and astonishment, and lots of plain hard graft. Ultimately it is a story of operational success based on collective vision and dedication of literally thousands of people with the desire to make South Georgia a better place than when they themselves first saw it."

Opening the book one is immediately impressed by the high standard of the photographs (taken mainly by Roland Gockel and Tony Martin). They not only capture the grandeur of the scenery, the harshness of the terrain and the charismatic wildlife, but also the human dimension and what a team of skilled and totally committed people can achieve. However, the text is every bit as good as the pictures. It is a rollicking good read, covering the background to the project, South Georgia and its wildlife, and then the three phases of the eradication programme including the relentless succession of logistic problems with which Tony Martin and his team had to cope to successfully and safely complete the baiting fieldwork in 2015. Undeniably the story stands comparison with those from the historic age of polar exploration.

All the signs to date are that the operation has been a success. As of August 2016, no sign of rats has been reported for the area treated in 2011, despite extensive and intensive searches being carried out.



Successful breeding of the endemic duck and pipit populations has been reported on the main island whereas before the eradication programme started, this was restricted to small offshore refuge islands. In 2017, Team Rat hopes to return to South Georgia to check for signs of rats and mice, and in the unlikely event that some have survived, then determine how best to tackle them. However, funds are still needed for this trip. By buying a copy of this book you can help support the venture. Indeed, you should buy two copies, one for yourself and

a second to give as a present, ideally to a young person interested in wildlife or polar regions to inspire future generations of Team Rat and ensure that the legacy of the project continues for many years to come.

Tony Martin has been named as Conservationist of the Year for 2016 by the Zoological Society of London in recognition of his exceptional leadership of this, the world's largest rodent eradication operation.

Sarah Wanless



Seabirds of the World - Secret Realm of the Oceans' Wanderers By David Tipling. Reed New Holland, London, Sydney & Auckland. 2016. ISBN 978-1-92151-767-9. 192 pages, 150 colour photographs. Hardback, £16.99.

This landscape-format book celebrates the diversity and beauty of seabirds through an eclectic selection of David Tipling's photographs. The images span Tipling's celebrated photographic career over the last three decades, but most images are fairly recent, taken since digital SLR cameras revolutionised seabird photography. For the technically minded, the details of how the images were captured — in terms of camera, lens, aperture, shutter speed and ISO — are listed at the end of the book. As an aspirant seabird photographer, I found this information interesting for the insights it gives on how some of the effects were achieved.

The book is divided into five sections: at sea, the mating game, family life, seabird cities, and survival. Most of the 150 images are accompanied by a caption, which either explains the image, or makes a point about the biology or conservation of seabirds. I found a few typos, and pedants will find points to quibble in the text, but most disconcerting for the seabird aficionado was to find species misidentified. Calling a

Nazca Booby *Sula granti* a Masked Booby *S. dactylatra* is perhaps forgivable, but the Shy Albatross *Thalassarche cauta* on page 170 is a lovely adult Salvin's Albatross *T. salvini*, and the Southern Giant Petrel *Macronectes giganteus* on page 172 is blatantly a Northern Giant Petrel *M. halli*.

These issues aside, this is an aesthetically pleasing book to flip through. Inevitably, the quality of the images varies; a few are fairly pedestrian by today's high standards, but many are memorable thanks to Tipling's eye for different angles or his willingness to explore with exposure and shutter speed. The short captions convey a wide range of information about seabirds to a lay reader, and the book may well inspire a few more people to catch the seabirding bug.

Peter Ryan