

REVIEWS



Conservation of Marine Birds by Lindsay Young and Eric VanderWerf (Eds.) Academic Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts. 2022. ISBN 9780323885393. 624 pages. Paperback, £115.00.

Scientific research can play a powerful role in informing conservation, but getting the information off the journals' pages and into practical action plans is often more challenging than expected. Given the wealth of information published, the sheer number of relevant journals and the pressures faced by time-poor practitioners, it can be extremely difficult to ensure that new revelations reach the correct audience. This makes books such as *Conservation of Marine Birds* all the more important. They represent an opportunity to condense the most recent, critical information into a single volume which has value to all those involved in conservation.

I firmly believe that anyone and everyone who works with seabirds would benefit from having a copy of this book on their shelf. For those who have a direct involvement in conservation, its value is immediately apparent. On the other hand, if you consider your work to be less applied (and as a behavioural ecologist I count myself among you), this book could open your eyes to new ways in which your research might help improve the situation for seabirds.

Within its pages you will find the most up-to-date information on both familiar and novel challenges faced by the world's seabird populations. I was particularly intrigued by a chapter dedicated to health

and diseases, which while topical, is not my area of expertise. This chapter outlined a fascinating case study on the well-known threat of avian influenza, but also introduced me to paralytic shellfish poisoning; a condition of which I was entirely ignorant. I think it is highly likely that a book with such a large scope will be able to teach even the most seasoned seabird researcher a thing or two.

All too often, academic research outlines the multitude of problems seabirds face, without necessarily providing suggestions of how they might be tackled. This book avoids this trap by dividing its content into two distinct sections, 'Threats' and 'Solutions'. Practitioners will find this divide particularly helpful. A book as comprehensive and dense as this one must be easy to navigate. While some readers will read this book cover to cover, I suspect the majority will be interested in particular sections. In such cases, the book's effective signposting (in the form of the contents and in text directions) makes it easy to find what you need.

The 'Solutions' section places appropriate emphasis on the interface between humans and seabirds, and how this relationship might be improved. The book considers this for a variety of interesting angles, including chapters on the 'Legal and Cooperative Mechanisms for Conserving Seabirds' and 'The Cultural Aspects of Seabird Conservation'. This latter example is particularly refreshing. Critically, this chapter concludes with a list of recommendations which aim to simultaneously facilitate the

inclusion of diverse voices in seabird conservation and provide sound advice to those of us who collect data from Indigenous Places.

At its core, the book's substance comes from a hefty reading list, which acts as the much-needed link between scientific evidence and conservation action. By relying on both cutting-edge research and classic studies, *Conservation of Marine Birds* highlights the value that old and new knowledge have in the world of wildlife management. It also adapts a number of figures to illustrate its points, alongside original illustrations. Occasionally these are a little on the pokey side, and/or employ colouring which make them less accessible, but they do add much needed breaks to the text heavy pages.

Conservation of Marine Birds is a book grounded in evidence and practicality which stem from the scientific methods. However, it also possesses a (seabird-loving) human heart. This is revealed in the book's willingness to stress that we do not have all the answers (e.g. the chapter 'Mitigating Light Attraction' has an engaging section dedicated to knowledge gaps) and through its tone, which is unwaveringly hopeful. In its final sentences, the book argues that we must act collectively to ensure that conservation solutions are refined and implemented. I believe that the production of this book was a notable step towards achieving this shared goal.

Fionnuala McCully

Puffins: Life on the Atlantic Edge by Kevin Morgans. Sandstone Press, Muir of Ord. 2022. ISBN 9781913207779. 192 pages. Hardback, £29.99.

Puffins: Life on the Atlantic Edge by Kevin Morgans has garnered a lot of justified praise since its publication and there is no doubt that it is beautifully produced. It is clear the author has spent a good deal of time in the field closely observing Puffins *Fratercula arctica* and preparing for photography. His photographic work, largely on Shetland and Fair Isle, led to his award of the portfolio prize in the globally contested Bird Photographer of the Year awards in 2021 for his work on Puffins. This latest book showcases the beauty of Fair Isle, Shetland, and the Puffins that breed there.

The book is a beautifully curated portfolio of Puffin images interspersed with well written supporting text. Describing various stages or elements in the life of this iconic highly photogenic species, the book is logically organised into the chapters: 'About the Puffin'; 'Life in the Colony'; 'The Race to Breed'; 'Feeding and Flight'; and 'An Uncertain Future'. The text is concisely written to support the photographs

including some interesting anecdotes plus details of some of the photo shoots. It is worth reading the photo legends because there is often interesting information that isn't in the main body of the text.

The introduction details some of the author's life story including how he began in wildlife photography and particularly his experiences discovering Puffins on Shetland and Skomer, Wales. He now regularly visits his favourite location of Fair Isle, to photograph the beauty of the island and its Puffins. 'About the Puffin' sets the scene with basic information presenting a concise overview of the species' physical characteristics, biology, behaviour, ecological role and relationship to other auks. 'Life in the Colony' covers a range of topics, including their plumage changes, social dynamics, breeding habits, feeding patterns, and migration patterns. Morgans draws on his field experience to provide insights into some of the intricacies of life on a Puffin colony, such as how they communicate with one another and protect their territory, delving into challenges due to climate change and human activities. 'The Race to Breed' presents details of Puffin colony life reviewing some of the complex web of relationships that exists among Puffin



pairs as they work together to rear their young. From the impressive engineering feats involved in creating nesting burrows to the subtle nuances of courtship rituals, Morgans draws on his field observations to present an informative and engaging exploration of Puffin breeding behaviour. 'Feeding and Flight' delves into the unique adaptations and behaviours that allow Puffins to both successfully hunt for food underwater and navigate through the air with incredible manoeuvrability. Morgans describes the complex mechanics involved in Puffin flight, such as their need to use particularly fast wing beats to propel themselves forward and their ability to execute sharp turns and dives at high speeds. Additionally, he examines the specific methods used by Puffins when diving for fish, including their use of wings to propel themselves and the specialisations of their bills to catch prey with impressive accuracy. 'An Uncertain Future' provides insightful analysis of the current state of Puffin populations worldwide. The author delves into some of the factors that have contributed to the

decline of Puffins, including climate change, overfishing, and habitat destruction, while also highlighting some of the successful conservation efforts, such as the creation of protected areas and habitat restoration projects. Overall, this chapter serves as an important reminder of the urgent need for further action to protect Puffins from imminent threats.

Anyone interested in seabirds or animal behaviour will find much to appreciate in this insightful book. The writing is clear and precise, making the underlying science accessible to a wider readership without sacrificing accuracy or nuance. The book is a visually stunning and informative guide to the lives of Puffins, featuring Morgans' own photographs of these much-loved seabirds in their natural habitats. Overall, *Puffins: Life on the Atlantic Edge* is a beautifully illustrated and engaging book that will appeal to anyone with an interest in wildlife and the natural world.

Jeff Stratford