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The Auk 118(3):815–816, 2001

A Thesaurus of Bird Names: Etymology of European Lexis Through Paradigms—Michel Desfayes. 1998. *Muséé Cantonal d'Histoire Naturelle*, Sion, Switzerland. Two volumes, 1240 + 1288 pages, CD-ROM. ISBN 2-88426-021-8. \$476 for the set or each component can be purchased separately (Volume 1, Cloth, \$238.00; Volume 2, Cloth, \$251.00; CD-ROM, \$338.00).—This monumental work deals not with scientific names or “Linnaean” nomenclature, but with names for birds that exist in other than the scientific idiom—the so-called “common” or “folk” names for birds. The first volume is a compilation of such names for all of the species of European and Middle Eastern birds, plus a few others that are almost universally known, such as the domestic fowl (*Gallus gallus*) and the Ostrich (*Struthio camelus*). Unfortunately, the introductory material does not clearly state or list which languages are included, but most of them appear in the list of abbreviations. Names for birds have been sought in Indo-European languages including “Iranian, Caucasian, and Hamito-Semitic languages” because “the area covered by these languages includes the Palaearctic region, a

zoogeographical entity within which can be found most of the European bird species. . . .” Names in Finnish, Estonian, and Hungarian are omitted because they are not Indo-European languages. Names from languages written with different alphabet characters, such as Cyrillic, Hebrew, and Greek, are transliterated with Roman characters.

The first volume proceeds species by species, with each account consisting of a list of names, given language by language, arranged in a geographical sequence more or less from the northwest (British Isles) to the south and east. All names that the author could discover are presented along with information on the counties or provinces in which each name, no matter how local, is used. The amount of detail is staggering. The section on names for the Magpie (*Pica pica*), for example, comprises 13 pages, of which more than 6 deal only with names used in Germany.

Being Swiss, with an interest in etymology, Desfayes naturally has several languages at his command and has written his book using more than one. In the species accounts, explanatory remarks are generally in French, except for names from the British Isles, for which English is used. Remarks about German names seem to be in either German or English. Definitions in Volume Two may be in either English or French. Anyone who is linguistically challenged would have considerable difficulty using this work, but would have little need for it in any case.

The second volume is less easily characterized. About two-thirds of it consists of what Desfayes refers to as his “paradigms” (Appendices 3–14). Here, names or the words used in names, along with various cognates (or perhaps pseudocognates), are arranged according to qualities, somewhat in the manner of the familiar Roget’s *Thesaurus* of English words. The major groupings include terms of chromatic origin (e.g. red, dark, spotted), morphological (e.g. tall, tufted, swollen), acoustic (mostly onomatopoeic), kinetic (e.g. fly, wag, dive), and others.

The ultimate subheadings are combinations of sounds used in words that Desfayes identifies as being related to a given quality. Thus, section 3.2.54.2 is a list of words that contain the sounds “r-p” and mean “red”, including the Greek, Latin, English, Czech and other words for turnip (*rapys*, *rapa*, *rape*, *repka*). The list also contains a Russian word for menstrues (*repaki*), Serbo-Croatian, Polish, Ukrainian and other words for linnnet, robin, and whinchat (*repka*, *rzepoluch*, *repel*, *repalsic*), and a French word for the caruncles of a turkey (*roupie*), among others.

There are fascinating diversions to be encountered here. For example, we learn that the traditional (and believable) derivation of “belladonna” is folk etymology, and that “mayonnaise,” according to Desfayes, is related to words meaning flecked or spotted, and is not derived from the siege of Port Mahón, Minorca, as given in many etymologies. These paradigms will be of as much interest to philologists and

ethnolinguists as they may be to ornithologists. That great erudition, maybe even genius, has been exercised in their compilation is scarcely to be doubted, though I cannot shake off the impression that they may reflect considerable idiosyncrasy as well.

The second volume also contains various other lists of bird names, including those in ancient languages, words for nests, eggs, and bats, terms used in falconry, and bird names from "overseas franco-phone countries" and Latin America.

There is no index, because this would have added more than 700 pages to the work. The CD-ROM, therefore, is an absolute necessity. If, for example, one encountered an unknown word for some European bird and wanted to know to what species it applied, there would be no practical way to find it without searching the text with a computer. I have little doubt that it would be found, however. Michel Desfayes has presented us with a labor of love of such scope as to leave thoughtful reviewers with a lingering sense of their own deficiencies.—STORRS L. OLSON, *Department of Vertebrate Zoology, National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. 20560, USA. E-mail: olson.storrs@nsmnh.si.edu*

The Auk 118(3):816, 2001

Albatrosses—W. L. N. Tickell. 2000. Pica Press (Helm Information Ltd.), Sussex, United Kingdom. 488 pp., 52 color plates + text figures. ISBN 1-873403-94-1. Cloth \$60.00.—W. L. N. (Lance) Tickell can truly be considered one of the fathers of albatross research. In 1958, he started banding Wandering Albatrosses on Bird Island, South Georgia, and that formed the nucleus of the long-term population study of that species which continues to this day. I still remember the thrill, some 30 years later, of encountering some of the birds Lance had banded as adults when I too was fortunate enough to work on Bird Island (even though those particular birds might have been only about halfway through their remarkable lives!). The book *Albatrosses* represents a superb, and fitting, conclusion to Tickell's more than 30 years of professional involvement with these magnificent birds, and it provides the most comprehensive, comparative account of the albatross family currently available.

The bulk of the book, 10 chapters in all, detail each of the 13 species or sub-species of albatross, organized from a geographical perspective: the southern,

tropical, and northern albatrosses. Each of those sections commences with an overview of the relevant oceans, oceanography, bathymetry, and meteorology. Each chapter is rich in historical and geographical information on the discovery and exploration of the many breeding islands as well as the different species themselves. Every breeding island is dealt with individually, with maps indicating all breeding sites, and tables summarizing breeding populations. All aspects of albatross biology are then covered species by species, including breeding ecology and population dynamics, food, parasites and disease, and predators. Those sections are well illustrated with line drawings and include examples of most of the exciting at-sea distribution and foraging data that have only recently been obtained using remote-sensing and satellite tracking. The species accounts are preceded by a general introduction (Chapters 1 and 2) dealing with issues such as basic anatomy, similarities and differences with the albatrosses' closest relatives, the petrels, and the current controversy over albatross classification. Following the species accounts, Chapters 13–16 review and synthesize aspects of comparative biology (molt, flight, behavior, and ecology), and the text concludes with two chapters on human relations and attitudes towards albatrosses, including a fine collection of albatross poetry. The book also contains a substantial appendix, with a checklist, morphological measurements, egg size, diet, aging criteria, behavior, and population estimates for all breeding locations, together with an extensive bibliography (with references up to and including 1999).

In general, the book is very well produced, and the text is well written and highly readable. The general reader (including nonornithologists) will find much of interest here (and they should not be put off by the opening of the Introductory chapter in which "cladistic," "trinomial," and "mitochondrial cytochrome *b*" appear in rapid succession without explanation or definition!). For me, the highlights of the book included the "Photographic Section" with color photographs of each species (many taken by the author himself), and the line drawings by Robin Prytherch, which superbly and delightfully illustrate many of the albatross' complex courtship behaviors. However, the text is also sufficiently detailed and comprehensive enough to be of great value to the professional biologist (especially for the detailed population data). The book will perhaps be most often visited as a reference text rather than being read cover to cover. *Albatrosses* would make a fine gift for any amateur ornithologist and should be on the book shelf of all seabird biologists.—TONY D. WILLIAMS, *Department of Biological Sciences, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, British Columbia, V5A 1S6, Canada. E-mail: tdwillia@sfu.ca*