

Boag, D. (1982): *The Kingfisher (Der Eisvogel)*. Blanford Press, Poole, Dorset. 120 S., 66 Farbfotos, USA \$ 17.95, Canada \$ 22.95.

Bezzel, E., und F. Pölking (1979): *Kleinod Eisvogel. Die Welt der Tiere. 2. Sonderheft*. Kilda Verlag, Greven. 31 S., 60 Fotos, DM 7,80.

As the kingfisher is one of the most spectacular European birds it is not surprising that several people have been attracted to study its habits and to publish their observations in books and popular magazines to make them available to a wider non-scientific audience. This necessarily leads to overlapping, repetition and redundancy as clearly illustrated by D. BOAG's book. It carries not only the same title as the book by R. EASTMAN (1969), it also describes almost the same aspects of the life cycle: distribution, territory and aggression, courtship and nest-building, eggs and young, food and feeding habits, mortality. Even the chapters on myth and legend and on photographic techniques resemble each other. This statement should not be taken as a devaluation of the book. BOAG seems to be a good and careful observer and he describes the general behaviour of his birds very well. Also, during the seven years of his study, he has noticed some rarely occurring behaviour patterns (e.g. the flapping flight during courtship), has paid attention to individual differences between birds, and has done a few simple experiments revealing interesting details on threat display and fishing behaviour. With the aid of photographs and slow motion film he has got insight into some fast occurring events. 66 of the author's colour pictures are published in this book, most of them of good quality and clearly illustrating the points made in the text. Thus for the reader interested in the European kingfisher BOAG's book can be recommended. But it goes very little beyond the kingfisher. It is mainly descriptive and observations are rarely discussed in the framework of general biological principles.

In this respect the little booklet by BEZZEL and PÖLKING is clearly superior. It covers distribution, population density, density fluctuations and their causes, including reproduc-

tion, mortality and migration. All topics are reduced to the most important parameters and are presented in a condensed form. And yet the authors do not bore the reader with too theoretical considerations but successfully use the theory to develop a practical program for the protection of kingfishers. It includes, among other suggestions, maintenance of suitable habitats, creation of nesting-sites, avoidance of disturbance and providing of food. The make-up of the booklet is very appealing and the superb action-pictures give a better impression of the kingfisher's behaviour than many pages of description could do. Although most of them are black and white they are more fascinating than the ones in BOAG's book. The only pictures where colour would have aided the understanding are the three diving shots on p. 7 whereas the colour on p. 29 appears superfluous.

In summary: both publications complement each other and can be recommended to anybody interested in the behaviour, ecology and protection of the kingfisher.

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