Sir David Attenborough wrote in 2012 “In my book the best ornithological illustrator alive” and this is quoted from his foreword to Dr Penny Olsen’s book “An Eye for Nature”. Sir David met William Cooper many times and owned a lot of his work. William Cooper (1934-2015) died in May 2015 after the publication of this book in 2014 (reprinted in 2015).

Penny Olsen - Cooper’s biographer, traces his life from humble beginnings in Newcastle during the time of the Great Depression through the years of ups and downs. But from early childhood, William was obsessed with birds and butterflies. The early pages include family photos as well as some of his early paintings. He worked at various occupations including taxidermy, men’s store salesman, window dressing and also saw National Service in 1954. Shortly after discharge he began to paint more seriously and entered many local competitions and gaining some awards.

His earlier paintings were of land and seascapes that sold well. He also illustrated the booklets by the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service promoting nature conservation to school children. However, circumstances around 1964 when a chance meeting with Keith Hindwood started Cooper on a serious journey in painting birds. This resulted in the publication of Hindwood’s book *A Portfolio of Australian Birds* 1968, illustrated by Cooper.

In the mid to late 1960’s Cooper met up with Joseph M Forshaw who was planning to produce *Parrots of the World*. This was the start of many years the two collaborated in publishing prestige bird books. It also meant that Cooper started to travel widely with the first of many trips to Papua New Guinea. Highlights of that enterprise was Cooper’s illustration of the wonderful Birds of Paradise endemic to PNG. He also worked on Hornbills, Bower Birds, Kingfishers, Hoopoes and Pigeons and Doves, as well as some animal species, and travelled to Indonesia, India, and Africa and many return trips to PNG.
Cooper invariably incorporated native vegetation suited to the particular species in his wonderful paintings. He and wife Wendy spent a lot of time in North Queensland's tropical rainforest collecting fruit and plants of that area. Wendy was a self-taught naturalist and became expert in rainforest plant identification, producing the book *Fruits of the Australian Tropical Rainforest* that was illustrated by husband William.

Black-faced Monarchs – an earlier work for the Hindwood book


This book is a tribute to the outstanding art of the late William T Cooper. His ability to render the birds in detailed precision to the standard of scientific identification is paralleled by the stand-out vibrancy of the works. Penny Olsen has skillfully woven the story with his magnificent paintings including some preliminary sketches to make this book a great volume to have - to just browse through periodically, to appreciate both the illustration and the skill of the artist who “captured” a moment in time.

**BIRDS OF THE DARWIN REGION - NIVEN McCRIE and RICHARD NOSKE**

BOOK REVIEW – Gil Porter


In the introduction Richard Noske outlines a history of ornithology in the Darwin region from early days of 1869. A number of bird publications starting with Storr’s *List of Northern Territory Birds* (1967) are listed as precursors to the *Birds of the Darwin Region*. Maps on pp 2 and 3 define the area covered by this book. As important background to the objectives of this comprehensive book, the characteristics of climate and the extreme seasonality of this region of diverse habitat are outlined. Expectations of waterbirds, shorebirds and seabirds, landbirds, and the movements and breeding differences in this area are explained. The effects of an enormous spring tidal range of six to seven metres and a more usual one to three metres along the extensive shoreline has significant impact on migrating and resident birdlife access to intertidal mudflats. A map on page 14 represents the varied physical environment and habitat areas of this region. Specific sections of these broad categories are commented on for their distinctive effects in the region.

**What have you been reading?**

Write a review of your last birding book for Warbler - articles to Peter Crane, editor

A very helpful chapter - About this book – covers how the data from around 120,000 records were used in this book. Of particular interest is the map on page 31 with grids covering the region noting the number of surveys and number of species for each cell. An explanation of how the coloured dots (black and grey) were arrived at to represent distribution of