

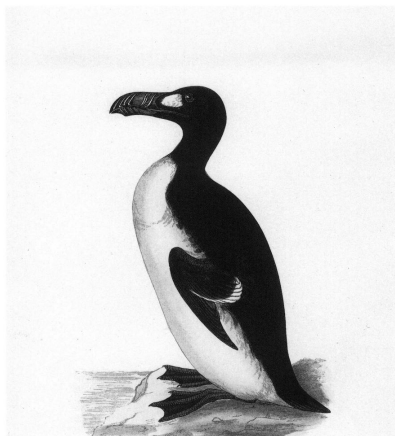
BOOKS RECEIVED:

Dale SERJEANTSON (2009). *Birds*. Cambridge Manuals in Archaeology. Cambridge University Press, 486 pp.

CAMBRIDGE MANUALS IN ARCHAEOLOGY

Birds

Dale Serjeantson



It is hard to believe that the book by Dale Serjeantson is the first comprehensive approach to summarize our knowledge on avian zooarchaeology, at least the first in English. Birds and humans have interacted in many various ways since time immemorial, and the evidence for that interdependence is seen in the avian remains that are the object of zooarchaeological studies. The literature that details bird remains is very rich and the subjects covered are numerous – from food and clothing through rituals, myths, and beliefs to tools and decorations. Perhaps the vast variety of subjects was the primary reason that no one had previously volunteered to summarize this knowledge. No one until Dale Serjeantson did so in her 2009 book *Birds*.

The book profits from Serjeantson's life-long experience in teaching and researching birds and other zooarchaeological topics at the University of Southampton, UK. Her personal contacts established over the years with other researchers worldwide (I am just one of the many) helped her keep up-to-date with all aspects of avian zooarchaeology and gather the necessary material for this comprehensive book.

The book includes sixteen chapters followed by three appendixes, bibliography and index. Each chapter focuses on one subject and contains carefully selected, well-illustrated examples from original papers published in various scientific journals by numerous authors. The reader is served the essential up-to-date knowledge written in a logical and clear manner. Every chapter finishes with a short discussion and/or conclusion section that highlights the key aspects. The first six chapters deal with methods of studying skeletal remains. These include avian anatomy and biology, aging and sexing, pathology, identification, quantification and taphonomy. The next three chapters discuss eggs and eggshell, feathers and skins, tools and ornaments. The last section of the book explores the interactions between people and birds, which include hunting wild birds for food, domestication, hawking and cockfighting, birds as symbols and in ritual. An extensive bibliography that fits on 41(!) pages makes an extremely useful database, and the detailed index helps to navigate the book.

Is there anything I do not like in the book? I do not know. But I am sure it is an invaluable help for students of (zoo)archaeology, their teachers and all people interested in birds. I would perhaps alter the modest title *Birds* to something like *Fundamentals in avian zooarchaeology* but I suspect that this was not in Dale Serjeantson's gift as it forms the latest in the Cambridge Manuals in Archaeology series.

Zbigniew M. BOCHENSKI