

BOOK REVIEW

Practical Weather Forecasting by F. Mitchell-Christie (Hutchinson of Australia, Richmond, Vic., 1977). \$8.95, 96 pages.

This book is written by a former Royal Navy Meteorological Officer and is aimed at those who wish to understand more about the weather around them and the implications of the, at times subtle, changes in this weather for their present and future activities. The book is hard covered, well bound and beautifully presented, with a liberal sprinkling of figures and high quality photographs. However, this quality is not maintained in the text, which is riddled with inaccurate and misleading statements.

There are eight chapters in all and a fairly comprehensive index. The first six chapters proceed, rather shakily, through: a discussion on what is meant by weather (Ch 1); a description of what makes the winds and how clouds are formed (Ch 2); how air masses determine our weather (Ch 3); the constitution of the atmosphere (Ch 4); and a brief foray into air flow around the world (Ch 5), which is continued in more detail in Chapter 6. Reading through these chapters I noted over fifty significant inaccuracies, together with a similar number of minor errors of omission or misinterpretation. For example, the wind blowing from high to low pressure is referred to as the 'gradient wind', jet streams occur 'just within the stratosphere', the 'atmosphere is less than ten miles thick', and the air over central Australia is 'dry and very hot, but still heavy enough for the surface pressure to be greater than near the sea'.

A good description of sea state and some basic yachting concepts follows in Chapter 7, while Chapter 8 contains an adequate discussion on making a weather chart.

It is a pity that the book contains so many errors. If the text had been as good as the presentation it would have provided a valuable addition to the scarce literature at this level.

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