



GOVERNMENT OF GIBRALTAR
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Landmark new book by Museum Director published internationally

Gibraltar Museum Director, Professor Clive Finlayson, has just had a new book published by the prestigious international publisher A & C Black under the T & A D Poyser label, generally regarded as the most important list for ornithological titles in the world. The book - *Avian Survivors. The History and Biogeography of Palearctic Birds* – traces the history of the birds that occupy the Palearctic Region. This is the vast geographical area which stretches from Gibraltar to Japan. Professor Finlayson has combined his two major areas of expertise – the ecology of birds and the study of the history of environmental and climatic change of our planet, in this new book. Much of Professor Finlayson’s research incorporates the unique record of bird fossils from Gorham’s Cave. Indeed, the cover of the book is a wonderful watercolour by nature artist Tim Worfolk; it depicts Gorham’s Cave at the time when the Neanderthals were living in Gibraltar, with a corresponding environment and birds. The back cover shows the same image but today, with a sea level rise and the birds that visit the site today.

Gibraltar is thus given prime status in a major book that covers a vast region of our planet. The jacket describes the book in the following terms: using a fresh approach that classifies birds according to their bioclimatic characteristics, Clive Finlayson views the history and distribution of Palearctic birds from a radical new angle. History and chance play a central role in a story that has its origins before the asteroid impact that finished off the dinosaurs. In this book Finlayson shows that the avifauna of the Palearctic long predates the glaciations of the last two million years, and had established itself gradually during the turbulent times of the Miocene and Pliocene, the lifting of Tibet and the drying of the continents having a major influence on these birds. Those that made it to the start of the glaciations were equipped to deal with whatever climate could throw at them. They were the avian survivors, and they are still here with us today. The book is packed with figures and with a rich colour section. *Avian Survivors* tells the definitive story of the birds of the Palearctic, across space and time. It should interest those interested in birds but also those with an eye on climate change.

Commenting on his recent book Professor Finlayson expressed his delight at having had another important work, following from books published by Cambridge and Oxford University Presses, published by one of the world’s major publishers. He expressed his satisfaction that, once again, he had been able to give little Gibraltar a pivotal position in a work of this magnitude. “I am a Gibraltarian, born and bred, and I am proud to be able to give something back to my Rock and its people. We are small but our outreach far exceeds our physical dimensions.”