



West African Ornithological Society
Société d'Ornithologie de l'Ouest
Africain



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Book Reviews — Revues de Livres

Flore et Faune du Parc National d'Odzala, Congo. Ed. by R.J. Dowsett & F. Dowsett-Lemaire, 1997. 135 pp. Tauraco Res. Rep. 6, Tauraco Press, Liège. ISBN 2-87225-001-8, paperback, £12.

Odzala National Park is located in N Congo, and is one of seven national parks financed by the European Union's Ecofac Project. It contains forest-savanna mosaic in the south, forest in the north. This report also includes two chapters on the birds of two other reserves, Nouabalé-Ndoki N.P. on the border with Central African Republic, and Réserve de la Léfini in the southeast. Four of the chapters are in French, with English summaries (vegetation, large mammals, buffaloes, management planning) and five in English, with French summaries (birds, small mammals, butterflies, the other two reserves). All but one of the chapters (actually more like papers) are by one or more of the editors, and this unnecessarily separate treatment results in some repetition, such as vegetation descriptions, and a full-page map which appears in several places!

The ornithology of northern Congo has been virtually unexplored and the thorough 13-month study described in the Odzala bird chapter results in a list of 435 species, including such interesting discoveries as what is probably a new race of *Cisticola eximia* south of the forest block. New records of biogeographical interest were also obtained in Nouabalé-Ndoki and Léfini.

This is definitely not a guidebook, but is a scholarly contribution to the natural history, including the ornithology, of this poorly-known part of central Africa.

Alan Tye

A Bibliography of Afrotropical Birds, 1971–1990. By R.J. Dowsett, C.H. Fry & F. Dowsett-Lemaire, 1997. 338 pp. Tauraco Res. Rep. 7, Tauraco Press, Liège. ISBN 2-87225-002-6, paperback, £30.

This new bibliography attempts to continue Fry's annual bibliographic supplements to *Malimbus*, which covered the period 1975–86. The new work expands coverage to the Malagasy region, but omits Fry's valuable subject codings. The major part (> 6300 titles) is classified by "taxon" (including general categories such as "seabirds"), with the remaining 2000 titles grouped by region or research subject. The authors admit that the sections on diseases, parasites, anatomy and physiology are probably less complete than other subject areas.

I checked the completeness and usefulness of this Bibliography in two ways, using papers by one particular author and the avifauna of the oceanic Gulf of Guinea islands. Only one publication of 13 in the first group I checked was missed completely, but three others, which each dealt with more than one species, were classified under only one of the species which they treated, rather than under the respective genera. In one case, a paper dealing with two genera, in different families, was classed only under one of the species treated, with no cross-referencing. This could lead to severe difficulty in tracking down all publications dealing with a given species.

I know of 27 references from the period covered which deal with Príncipe, São Tomé and Annobon, and which match the compilers' criteria (there are still more "grey" references which are not captured by the Bibliography). Of these, only eight are listed in the geographical section, even though almost all deal with island endemics and only with the islands. One of them is listed under Annobon, rather than Equatorial Guinea, an inconsistency of treatment which I spotted only by chance. Fourteen others are listed by taxon, but are not cross-referenced in the geographical section, making them impossible to discover by anyone not knowing exactly which species occur on the islands, and even for someone who does know, a laborious search through every species occurring on the islands would be necessary to reveal all of them. The remaining five do not appear to be listed anywhere. A further factor which makes the book even more difficult to use is that the index does not include countries or genera, but only regions (e.g. West Africa) and families. This means that it can take ages to ascertain that a country is not listed (e.g. Equatorial Guinea), or to find a particular species. I found I had to refer to Dowsett & Forbes-Watson (1993, *Checklist of Birds of the Afrotropical and Malagasy Regions*, Tauraco Press), which uses the same systematic arrangement, in order to locate some species (species which have been classed in more than one family, in which the Gulf of Guinea is rich). This may not be so difficult with other regions, but one should not have to buy Dowsett & Forbes-Watson in order to use the Bibliography, when a better index in the latter would easily solve the problem.

I do not know whether my overall figure of 15% omission is valid for the Bibliography as a whole. It is worrying but perhaps excusable, as no literature review can be expected to catch everything, and this is a part-time labour of love. What is worse is the dearth of cross-referencing, which renders it extremely difficult to track down relevant works. Fry's earlier coded bibliographies were much better in this respect, and it is a pity that the coding system has been abandoned (even for works that were included in Fry's listings) or rather, not replaced by cross-referencing.

The authors state that future editions will depend on sales of the present one. I think it would be worth the price if the cross-referencing were better. I should like to recommend its purchase, in order to convince the authors to follow it with more, as such a bibliography is definitely needed and valuable. So, buy it, but beware its limitations, and try to convince the authors to improve the cross-referencing and indexing in the next one!

Alan Tye