



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



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species (or between subspecies), but the tapes do include many cuts which will be useful in West Africa. Individual recordings cover 100 bird species (of which almost half should be useful in West Africa), and remaining space on tape 2 is filled by a chorus in Sokoke Forest (Kenya), and four mammals.

The standard of recordings is generally high. Although many include background songs of other species, these do not prevent identification of the focus species, and rather add a sense of place to the cuts. Many certainly conjure up a painful nostalgia in one now isolated from the sounds of Africa. Compared to the well-known recordings of Chappuis, these tapes are, of course, much more limited, but they do form a useful supplement. I would especially recommend them to those visiting East Africa (many very local species are included) and, having bought them, you will continue to find them useful after returning to the west.

Alan Tye

Endemic Bird Areas of the World: priorities for biodiversity conservation. By A.J. Stattersfield, M.J. Crosby, J. Long & D.C. Wege, 1998. 846 pp., numerous maps and monochrome illustrations. Birdlife International. ISBN 0 946888 33 7, paperback.

This masterly work is the successor to ICBP's *Putting Biodiversity on the Map* (1992, Bibby, C.J. *et al.*, reviewed *Malimbus* 15: 55–56), but the present book is enlarged beyond recognition, with much more detail of EBAs and of the processes used to identify them. The entire book is an absolute model of clarity of layout and explanation, with an excellent introductory summary defining EBAs and demonstrating why they are important.

A concise chapter on the meaning of biodiversity, its distribution, its loss, and strategies for prioritizing its conservation, sets the backdrop to the book and explains the logic behind its approach. The EBA analysis is based on restricted-range (<50000 km²) species, but excluding seabirds and species currently reduced by human pressure to such a small range. Perhaps seabird breeding ranges should have been included; surely the island-breeding petrels, penguins and flightless cormorants are important indicators of centres of endemism. Also, although excluding species reduced by human activity to small ranges, while including extinct species, perhaps leads to a better identification of centres of endemism, it is perhaps less useful for present-day conservation planning. However, these points are addressed to some extent by the texts describing each EBA, which mention restricted-range seabirds and other threatened species. On the whole, the shortcomings of each step in the approach taken are honestly pointed out, and the consequences of different analytical approaches identified; a major shortcoming from a conservation point of view is that widespread threatened species are missed, such as grassland species and their habitats. But again,

But again, these points are mentioned in the individual EBA descriptions, where widespread threatened species that occur in the EBA are listed.

The explanation of how EBAs are defined is exceptionally clear, and accompanied by an analysis of their world distribution. EBAs on islands and continents are approximately equal in number, but most are in the tropics and southern hemisphere. Most restricted-range species, most threatened species, and most EBAs, depend on or are largely made up of tropical moist forest. There is a similarly clear analysis of the assessment of priority amongst EBAs, based on biological importance and threat level.

An objective of the book is to enable conservation action to be prioritized, and it is made clear that the EBA approach (bird-based) misses many centres of endemism for other organisms. Unfortunately, the use of birds as flagship species for area and biodiversity conservation has its limitations.

A region-by-region presentation of the EBAs sets their importance in a global context. West Africa (defined as WAOS's area of interest) has ten EBAs (including the Cape Verde and Gulf of Guinea islands, Upper Guinea and Lower Guinea forests, Cameroon mountains, east Congo-Kinshasa lowlands and Albertine Rift), plus eight Secondary Areas (which do not quite meet the EBA criteria).

The individual EBA accounts are concise (some perhaps too brief, but the book is already huge), and I spotted few errors: one W African one is the map of the Upper Guinea EBA, which does not include all the areas cited in the text as falling within it.

Besides its clarity, the book is a mine of useful information on bird biogeography and conservation. I would recommend anyone interested in these subjects to buy it, and use it to plan their research, conservation, and holidays!

Alan Tye