



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



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Mention must be made of the black and white textual illustrations, mainly of behaviour, from Ian Willis, which are useful and pleasant adjuncts for several species. The Acoustic references by Claude Chappuis are a valuable feature: he has selected expertly from a growing list of recordings.

Finally one comes to the coloured plates (plus a few in black and white of waders, gulls and terns in flight) which in this volume are all by Martin Woodcock. For the most part these are excellent, though perhaps not uniformly good, with Plate 32 (of the smaller pigeons) the least successful, giving the impression that no one could have trouble in distinguishing the two Treron species where they overlap; and that the body of Oena capensis is about wren size. On the other hand the Charadriiform Plates are quite splendid, although the chick of Rostratula benghalensis is clearly not drawn from a specimen since in fact it has bold longitudinal dark markings. For these plates it is gratifying to note that the very cumbersome system employed in Volume 1 for identifying the numerous individual portraits (involving the Plate, an outline series of numbered "ghosts" and finally a table of identities) has been somewhat simplified in that the "ghosts", now opposite the plates and of the same size, carry the labels directly. Most of the "ghosts" have shaded areas to group illustrations of the same species, sometimes of different races, sometimes of different plumages but some inconsistency in the employment of the shaded areas has not helped. But why cannot the portraits be numbered on the Plates and the space-wasting "ghosts" be eliminated altogether?

Much of what has been said so far has seemed critical rather than laudatory, though the criticism is intended to be helpful to the Editors with more volumes to come. The Editors and Contributors have worked together with the Artists to produce a Second Volume of the Birds of Africa that will be regarded as a worthy successor to Volume 1, a tribute to the memory of Leslie Brown, and a "must" for all interested in, or concerned with, African ornithology.

Since the "Birds of Africa" will inevitably become the authority for African nomenclature, it is hoped that the Editors are regarding this aspect of the work as of primary importance.

J. ELGOOD

THE VALUE OF BIRDS Ed by A.W. Diamond & F.L. Filion, 1986 277pp. ICBP Technical Publication No. 6. ICBP, Cambridge. £18.50, ISBN 0-946888-10-8.

This should be an essential part of the armoury of every bird conservationist. A stimulating and readable collection of papers giving the facts we need to persuade the non-converted to the need for bird conservation. Arranged in two sections, the first part of the book deals with "Birds as socio-economic resources" and the second with "Birds as bio-indicators of environmental conditions". The papers by Filion and Diamond give excellent summaries of the ways in which birds satisfy the basic needs of man at a number of different levels and how these can be sustained or even enhanced in perpetuity. Then follows a series of startling papers showing how previously intangible benefits from

activities such as bird-watching can be converted into economic cost-benefit analyses. A group of interesting papers at the end of the first section describe the important parts that birds play in the social and economic life of the Cree in Canada, Aboriginal Tasmanians, Jamaican fishermen, the people of Sulawesi and the Boran of Kenya.

The section on bio-indicators is a useful roundup of the ways in which birds have been used to monitor pollution. Birds are able to pick up and react to the effects of pollutants in a very sensitive or easily observed manner. Indeed, their sensitivity is often greater than that of the instruments of physical chemists. Here then, are presented the use of birds for indicating pollution from pesticides, acid rain and marine pollutants. Other sorts of environmental change may not be so usefully measured by the use of birds, because of slower reaction rates.

Finally, I must mention the important message from Christoph Imboden, director of ICBP, in his foreword: The economic usefulness of birds can never be the most important rationale for their conservation. They contribute importantly to the quality of life of mankind and so we must learn to appreciate their value as well as their price.

H.Q.P. CRICK

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A joint meeting of the West African Ornithological Society and the British Ornithologists Club will be held on Tuesday 26 September 1989, at 6.15 pm for 7 pm, when Roger Beecroft will speak after dinner on "Birds in the Sahara". The meeting will be held in the Senior Common Room, Sherfield Building, Imperial College, London, SW7. Those wishing to attend should send their acceptance with a cheque for 5 per person, payable to the B.O.C., to reach the Secretary to WAOS Council, Mrs A. Moore, 1 Uppingham Road, Oakham, Rutland, LE15 6JB, England, by 12 September 1989.