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**Société d'Ornithologie de l'Ouest**  
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Field work was supported by McHugh Ornithological Tours. Clarification of identification characters was facilitated by access to skins, kindly granted by the British Museum (Natural History).

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#### BOOK REVIEWS

THE BIRDS OF GHANA by L.G. Grimes (1987), 276 pp. BOU Checklist 9. British Ornithologists' Union, London. ISBN 0-907446-08-6.

This is an essential book for members of the West African Ornithological Society. Hopefully the BOU Checklist on Sierra Leone will not be long in appearing to complete the quartet of Checklists covering birds of the Anglophone territories in West Africa. Malimbus is helping to complete the West African picture by publishing checklists for some of the Francophone countries of the region.

Llew Grimes' checklist has many special merits: some evocative habitat photographs, much more scientific data than its predecessors and a comparison of the avifaunas of Ghana and Nigeria being among those to appeal to the reviewer. Clearly the 'guts' of any checklist is the species by species treatment summarising what is known of the status, distribution, movements and breeding of each, in this case covering 721 species and occupying 150 pages. But one wonders whether the immediately following 'Summary of Status', occupying a further 20 pages, is necessary. This has become a traditional feature of BOU Checklists but might be regarded as unnecessary and the Editors might like to consider whether or not it could be dropped. It seemed especially unnecessary in this List because Appendices follow with data of ringing recoveries, museums and collectors, and weights that again involve systematic listing of the majority of the species so that the repetition became striking. But, of course, future research workers may find in any one of these tables just what they need to trace the data they seek. Appendix 5, locating specimens in the world's museums would seem to be particularly valuable to future workers.

There are no real surprises in the inclusions and absences in the species listed, apart from Malimbus cassini. Sight records of males (only) of this species from Tafo make me recall being invited there in 1960 by Gordon Donald because he was convinced he had sighted M. ibadanensis on the grounds of the West African Cocoa Research Institute at Tafo. In those days WACRI had research stations at both Tafo (Ghana) and Ibadan (Nigeria) and Donald's duties caused him to move between the two places, so he knew ibadanensis well from field sightings and hand specimens from around Ibadan. He was sufficiently convinced of its occurrence at Tafo to get me there to look with him, but no sighting was obtained during my all too brief stay. It is noteworthy that both Hall & Moreau (1970 Atlas of Speciation in African Passerine Birds, BM (NH), London) and Louette (1981, The Birds of Cameroon, Kon. Acad. Wetensch. Lett. Schone Kunst. België, Brussels) state that the Sanaga River in Cameroon is the western limit of M. cassini. From an inspection of skins of both species at the British Museum it would seem that male cassini has the red throat/breast intermediate in extent between the red 'bib' of female ibadanensis and the red 'apron' of the male, making field distinction of the two species very difficult if not impossible. The entirely black female cassini is also easily confused with other black weavers. There must be a case for collecting at least one specimen to resolve which species actually occurs in Ghana.

Since a Table (11, p.51) analyses the differences between the avifaunas of Ghana and Nigeria, a feature I found of special interest, I thought it a pity that neither the species by species treatment nor the Status Table had a symbol to indicate absence from Nigeria. The comparison of the two avifaunas would have been made more complete by a list of the species found in Nigeria but so far not reported from Ghana.

The Ghana Checklist rightly draws attention to the relative paucity of breeding data and suggests that this should be a field for future workers to investigate. There are a surprising number of species for which there are no Ghana breeding records but with breeding noted elsewhere in West Africa, notably Nigeria. This probably reflects the relative numbers of observers in the different countries.

Finally the Bibliography warrants favourable mention and the Gazetteer accurately pinpoints the places mentioned.

J.H. Elgood

BIRDS OF THE EASTERN CAPRIVI by J.H. Koen (1988) Southern Birds 15: 1-73 ISBN 0-620-10490-2. SA R7.00, from PO Box 650284, Benmore 2010, South Africa.

The avifauna of the end of the long finger-like projection of Namibia sandwiched between Botswana and Zambia. Includes an annotated checklist of 374 bird species and a description of geography, climate and habitats.

H.Q.P. Crick