



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



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references after each chapter are duplicated in a grand bibliography at the end. The print is poor and some of the photographs are unclear; but the book includes a wealth of information, discussion and recommendations which will be a boon to anyone studying or trying to control any of Africa's "feathered locusts".

Serious *Quelea* workers, students and libraries will need both books. If money is available but a choice must be made then plump for Bruggers & Elliott. If both shelf space and money are limiting and your perspective is southern African then buy Mundy & Jarvis.

R. A. Cheke

Les Oiseaux de Sénégal. By G.J. Morel & M-Y. Morel, 1990. 177 pp. ORSTOM, Paris. ISSN 1142-2580, ISBN 2-7099-1012-8. c. FFr 100 from ORSTOM, or from Subbuteo Books, Treuddyn, CH7 4LN, U.K.

Birds of The Gambia, 2nd (Revised) Edition. By M.E.J. Gore, 1990. 148 pp. + colour plates. British Ornithologists' Union, Tring. ISBN 0-907446-02-7. £16 (UK), £18 (overseas).

For political and linguistic reasons Senegambia has seldom been considered in any context as a single entity. Gérard Morel's *Liste Commentée des Oiseaux de Sénégal et de la Gambie* of July 1972 and the *Supplément No. 1* of 1980 was thus a welcome and valuable check-list of the avifauna of the whole region. The B.O.U. Checklist No. 3, *Birds of The Gambia*, by M.E.J. Gore, published a year later in 1981, provided a detailed check-list for The Gambia. Although the country only comprises 10,000 km² of the 210,000 km² of Senegambia, over 80% of the species recorded over the whole of the latter occur in The Gambia.

Like much of sub-Saharan West Africa, Senegal and The Gambia have undergone great changes during the past 50 years. It is difficult today to realise that in 1946 the road from Bathurst to Dakar ran almost entirely through forest, and Ostrich *Struthio camelus* were widespread and common over the Ferlo (north-central Senegal). Changes have been brought about by successive years of exceptionally low rainfall and the advance of the southern limit of the desert, particularly up to 1983, and by major hydrological and agricultural development projects and changes of land use in both countries.

The speed and scope of these changes, particularly in recent years, are reflected in the extensively revised new editions of both the check-lists. The years of drought and man-made schemes have brought a loss of woodland of all types and other changes such as the impoverishment of Lake Guiers and the drying of Jakali Swamp. Birds more usually associated with the desert, including the larks *Eremopterix nigriceps* and *Alaemon alaudipes*, have been regularly reported in northern Senegal since the 1970's.

In The Gambia there have been records since 1980 of Golden Sparrow *Passer luteus*, considered an arid savanna species, and there has been evidence of breeding of Abyssinian Roller *Coracias abyssinica*, which had previously been presumed to move north in July to breed.

Les Oiseaux de Sénégalie, completed in 1986 but not published until 1990, provides a profile of the entire Senegambian region. The introduction reviews the literature of both countries. A very comprehensive physical description of the region is given. The systematic list shows the geographical distribution and status of 623 species (an increase of 86 since the first list was published), about half of the species recorded for West Africa. English readers will find it helpful that the check-list includes the English name with the scientific and French name for each species. The new edition has the addition of a distributional map for each species, marked in 1° squares, providing a valuable atlas of distribution for Senegambia. Because it had become evident during the preparation of the maps that some 1° squares were much better censused than others, the authors carefully and systematically undertook an inventory of those areas which were less well known, making visits during both the dry and wet seasons, augmenting their data with sound records and observations of seasonal plumages in some species to give uniform coverage to the whole Senegambian region. The format of the book, which is not a field-guide, makes it easy to carry and it should be included in the luggage of any ornithologist visiting the region. It is an important addition to the literature of the Senegambia.

The second revised edition of *Birds of The Gambia* was necessitated when the first edition became out of print. The Gambia is probably the best ornithologically worked territory in West Africa. Its small size, the excellent road along the south bank of the river and, most importantly, the growth in the last 15 years of tourism, have brought many professional and knowledgeable amateur ornithologists to the country. The reserve of Abuko might well claim to be the best worked 72 hectares in the continent. An astonishing 256 species have been recorded there, more than have been recorded at Korup National Park in Cameroon. But the lowering of the water table of the area and the increasing pressures of nearby urban development give cause for concern for Abuko's continuing viability.

Since publication of the first edition further records have been collated. After careful review, some records have been deleted from the earlier Check-list, but a further 18 species have been added to the Gambian list. The Introduction provides a useful guide to The Gambia although champions of the River Niger might be surprised at the claim that the Gambia is West Africa's finest waterway. It is also perhaps difficult to agree that, in the Middle and Upper Gambia, the river could form any sort of barrier. Birds of all species cross the river quite freely, they often collect nesting material from one bank and build on the other. Since the north bank is generally more wooded than the south, one would expect that birds reaching a suitable habitat on the south bank would not stop from crossing the river to similar habitat on the north bank. The north bank is much less well known and it may therefore be observers, and not birds, which

are missing. It is interesting to see from the distributional maps in Morel & Morel how the records from Senegal and the Gambia complement each other, despite the discrepancy in the number of observers in the two territories. The distribution maps allow pleasant speculation, the Wood Owl *Ciccaba woodfordi* not yet recorded in The Gambia, may perhaps be found in the stretch of woodland on the north bank of the river opposite Basse and Fatoto.

Both check-lists include general maps of the territories and The Birds of The Gambia is enhanced by the author's excellent photographs, some in colour. As in the first editions, records of visitors and of The Gambia Ornithological Society and the summarised data from papers, some not widely circulated, provide much data for both check-lists. The authors give generous acknowledgment to this.

Dr Monk points out in the foreword to the first edition of Gore that zoo-geographical and political boundaries do not as a rule coincide, and the *Check-list of the Birds of The Gambia* should be considered in conjunction with Morel's *Liste Commentée*. This advice still applies and you are recommended to have both new editions on your bookshelves for a more complete view of the avifauna of the region.

Amberley Moore

Ornithological Importance of Coastal Wetlands in Guinea, by W. Altenburg & J. van der Kamp, 1991. 63pp. International Council for Bird Preservation, Cambridge and WIWO, Zeist. £5 from ICBP, 32 Cambridge Rd, Giron, Cambridge, U.K.

This is the latest in a series of ICBP Study Reports covering wetlands in West Africa. The two authors have already reported a preliminary study in NW Guinea (reviewed in *Malimbus* 12: 56-57) and have now proceeded to survey virtually all of the "coastal wetlands" (i.e. mangroves, mudflats, freshwater swamps and rice-fields) of the country during a further visit in the northern winter and one in the northern summer.

The mudflat data are based on counts of c. 10% of the mudflat area in Guinea. As in neighbouring Guinea-Bissau and Sierra Leone, Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea* is the commonest mudflat bird, but one peculiarity of Guinea is the great area of very soft mud, which is rare in Guinea-Bissau and Sierra Leone. This probably accounts for the low numbers of Knot *C. canutus* and Little Stint *C. minutus* but higher numbers of Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*. Data on the mangrove zone include estimates of total creek length based on French IGN maps: probably fairly reliable for "wide" creeks but surely impossible for "narrow" ones (how is a narrow creek defined?). As elsewhere in West Africa, Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* and Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* are the commonest mangrove waders. Guinean rice-fields and freshwater swamps appear less important for waders than those of Guinea-Bissau, possibly because they hold deeper water.

Over half a million waterbirds were estimated to be present in Guinea's coastal