



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



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## Book Reviews

**Biodiversity in Sub-Saharan Africa and its Islands.** By S.N. Stuart, R.J. Adams & M.D. Jenkins, 1990. 242pp. IUCN, Gland. ISBN 2-8317-0021-3. £12.50 (plus 15% p. & p.) from IUCN, 219c Huntingdon Rd, Cambridge, U.K.

As its opening sentence states, "The purpose of this document is to draw attention to the serious consequences of the loss of biological diversity in sub-Saharan Africa, including offshore islands". Its "primary target audience is people responsible for the management of wildlife and protected areas, and non-governmental organisations operating in Africa". It is primarily about conservation strategy and draws together information from a scattered literature of publications and unpublished reports.

After short introductory chapters on the status of biological diversity in Africa, threats to it, action required to preserve it and key areas (the four in West Africa being the Upper and Lower Guinea forests, the Cameroon mountains and mountains in the Sierra Leone-Guinea area) the bulk of the book consists of country profiles. These outline the status of important areas and, perhaps most importantly for the target audience, point out requirements for action, ranging from research to legislation. Considering the treatment of countries which I know best, I was surprised not to see the Gola forests of Sierra Leone identified in the chapter on key areas (although they are mentioned as an important site in the Sierra Leone chapter). Mt Nimba is, yet again, wrongly identified as the highest mountain in the Upper Guinea region (that honour falls to Bintumani in Sierra Leone); an undue emphasis on Nimba is perhaps diverting much-needed attention from the threats to forests on the other mountains in Guinea and Sierra Leone. Country coverage is somewhat uneven. Most West African countries get three pages in a range from 1.5 (Gambia and Cape Verde) to seven (Cameroon). Elsewhere, Tanzania and South Africa (the latter over-treated) get 11 pages each. Some of the country summaries, although intended to be brief, are rather too abbreviated, e.g. one of the three "suggested conservation activities" for the Gambia is "protection of habitats from modification for agriculture and settlements", not a statement of great utility. In contrast, the summary for São Tomé e Príncipe is good, with more useful detail, without occupying any more pages.

In summary, this will be a useful document for its target audience and others requiring a brief status summary, but more useful for some countries than others.

Alan Tye