



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



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Quelea quelea: Africa's Bird Pest. Ed. by R.L. Bruggers & C.C.H. Elliott, 1989. 402 pp. Oxford University Press, Oxford. ISBN 0-19-857607-2. £45.00.

Africa's Feathered Locust. Ed. by P.J. Mundy & M.J.F. Jarvis, 1989. 166 pp. Baobab Books, Harare, Zimbabwe. ISBN 0-908311-02-8. £7-65.

These two books on the most damaging of Africa's bird pests appeared almost simultaneously. Both are multi-authored texts. The first is a comprehensive, lavishly illustrated volume dealing with many facets of *Quelea quelea*; fittingly, it is dedicated to the bird's most influential student, the late Peter Ward. A by-product of his research on *Quelea* in Nigeria was to advance our understanding of intra-African bird migration in West Africa. Indeed ornithologists in Africa in general have learnt much about many species of bird by analogy with Ward's pioneering insights into *Quelea* migrations and Jones' and Ward's studies of its physiological responses. Up-to-date summaries of these aspects are presented in authoritative chapters by experts in the various ecological subjects, but the 25 chapters also present accounts of the business of dealing with *Quelea* in practice. Useful methodologies which are given ample treatment include marking with fluorescent pigments, radio-telemetry, trace element analyses, traditional African control practices, bird repellent chemicals, agronomic techniques to reduce damage, sprays and explosions and even "Quelea as a resource".

The Bruggers & Elliott book covers so much ground that ornithologists, *Quelea*-killers, integrated pest controllers and planners alike will need the book and learn much from it. The colour plates are an added bonus which will help to bring some of the less exciting subjects to life (or death, of *Quelea*!). Some criticisms and arguments could be raised about details of the specialist chapters (most lack summaries or conclusions for instance) but there is not space here to quibble with the minutiae of what is a long-overdue summary of knowledge on the biology and control of the world's most serious and spectacular bird pest. As such it will remain the standard work for many years.

Despite its catchy title, "Africa's Feathered Locust" is a paperback book about *Quelea quelea lathamii* in Zimbabwe, with passing reference to *Q. q. spoliator*. The title was obviously an afterthought as in the foreword we are told ".....this book, *The Quelea Problem in Southern Africa*, will become a valuable reference work in anyone's library". False pretences apart, there is a ring of truth in this statement as some of the chapters in this compendium have a Pan-African perspective. Nevertheless, as the editors point out, the book is intended partly as a guide to the farmer who wishes to minimise the queleas' impact on his crops. The book's genesis is attributed to Peter Ward who wanted the wealth of unpublished data, hidden in obscure reports, to see the light of day. This aim has been admirably achieved and the editors and authors deserve congratulations for producing the first bird monograph to be published in Zimbabwe.

Chapters with relevance to West Africa include Irwin's taxonomic essay, Craig's behaviour chapter, Jones on the breeding cycle, Elliott on pest status, Jarvis's two sections on control and La Grange's appendix describing mistblowers. Most of the

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.