



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



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difficultés linguistiques ne sauraient être un obstacle à la publication d'importantes données scientifiques et les auteurs ne doivent pas hésiter à soumettre leurs travaux sous une forme qui laisserait à désirer.

Alan Tye

W.A.O.S. biennial meeting, 6-8 May 1994

The third biennial meeting of the Society will be held on 6-8 May 1994 at Kampen, near the IJssel estuary in the Netherlands, based on an hotel there. It may also be possible to offer an alternative of cheaper accommodation. A package by minibus from Harwich via the Hook of Holland, arranged by Roger Beecroft of Halcyon Holidays, may be available for members travelling to the meeting from Britain. For full details of the meeting and travel package, send a self-addressed envelope to one of the following:

Mrs A.M. Moore, 1 Uppingham Road, Oakham, Rutland LE15 6JB, U.K.;

Dr M.-Y. Morel, 1 route de Sallenelles, 14860 Bréville-les-Monts, France;

J. Nap, Henri Dunantstraat 7, 8264 AB Kampen, Netherlands.

Amberley Moore

Réunion bisannuelle de la S.O.O.A., 6-8 mai 1994

La troisième réunion bisannuelle de la Société se tiendra du 6 au 8 mai 1994 à Kampen, près de l'embouchure de l'IJssel, aux Pays-Bas, dans un hôtel local. Il sera sans doute possible de proposer un logement moins cher à quelques membres. Pour recevoir par la suite plus de détails sur la réunion, envoyez une enveloppe avec vos nom et adresse à:

Mme M.-Y. Morel, 1 route de Sallenelles, 14860 Bréville-les-Monts, France, ou à

M. J. Nap, Henri Dunantstraat 7, 8264 AB Kampen, Pays-Bas, ou à

Mme A. M. Moore, 1 Uppingham Road, Oakham, Rutland LE15 6JB, Angleterre.

Amberley Moore

British Birdwatching Fair 1993

Once again, generous sponsorship (which provided half the cost of mounting the stand) by the Bird and Wildlife Bookshop of Piccadilly, London, enabled the Society to present a display at the annual Birdwatching Fair, held at Rutland Water on 20-22 August 1993. During the three days of the fair, the W.A.O.S. stand attracted many of the 10500 visitors.

Ian Wallace generously donated one of his paintings, a watercolour of a Blue Fairy Flycatcher *Elminia longicauda*, which was raffled. The winner was Mr J. Spencer of

Cambridge. The Rev. and Mrs Tom Gladwin kindly donated books for additional prizes, which were won by Mrs H. Corbet and Mr J. Knowles. The money raised was sufficient to cover the remaining expenses of running the stall and to make a modest addition to the Society's funds. New members were recruited and the fair provided an opportunity to meet some of the ornithologists currently working in West Africa.

Thanks are due to Francis Stone and Geoffrey Field, who travelled to Rutland Water to man the stall.

The fair this year was in aid of the BirdLife International Polish Wetlands Project and the organisers expect it to have raised £40000 for this purpose.

Amberley Moore

The ecological roles and value of sandgrouse: request for information.

Sandgrouse of the genus *Pterocles* inhabit hot, semi-arid and arid biotopes, preferring stony areas or low shrubby growth. They feed predominantly on hard seeds, especially of legumes (Fabaceae). Six species are endemic to Africa, and six are shared between northern Africa and Asia. India and Madagascar each have one endemic species. All are adapted to exploit the often ephemeral productivity of semi-arid ecosystems (Maclean 1976 *Proc. Int. Orn. Congr.* 16: 502-526, 1985 *S. Afr. J. Wildl. Res.* 15: 1-6, Thomas 1984a *S. Afr. J. Zool.* 19: 113-120, 1984b *J. Arid Environ.* 7: 157-181). The natural history of sandgrouse (Pteroclididae) has been reviewed by Maclean & Fry (1986 pp. 422-441 in Urban, E.K., Fry, C.H. & Keith, S. (eds) *The Birds of Africa*, vol. 2, Academic Press, London) and Campbell & Lack (1985 *A Dictionary of Birds*, Poyser, Calton). Although sandgrouse behavioural and physiological ecology is fairly well known, there is little recent documentation of their demography, ecological roles or value as a sustainable natural resource. Sandgrouse can occur at very high densities. Meinertzhagen (1954 *Birds of Arabia*, Oliver & Boyd, London) reported that huge flocks of Pin-tailed Sandgrouse *P. alchata* darkened the Arabian skies early this century, and Baker (1921 *The Game-birds of India, Burma and Ceylon*, John Bale, Sons & Danielsson, London) speculated that this was the "quail" which provided for the wandering Israelites. Baker (1921) and Lynn-Allen (1951 *Shot-gun and Sunlight: the Game Birds of East Africa*, Batchworth, London) described the great value placed on sandgrouse hunting at their traditional watering sites and in conjunction with falconry, and their importance as a source of protein for indigenous peoples in East Africa and India. Ali & Ripley (1969 *Handbook of the Birds of India and Pakistan*, Oxford University Press, London) tell of "prestige" shoots of Black-bellied Sandgrouse *P. orientalis* for entertaining British Viceroys, Governors and notables. Witherby (1902 *Bird Hunting on the White Nile*, The Office of "Knowledge", London) reported "sandgrouse shooting at many points along the banks of the White Nile". Recently, commercial shooting of Namaqua *P. namaqua* and Spotted *P. burchelli* Sandgrouse has been offered at R 450 (US\$ 150) per hunter per morning in South Africa. Although this