



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



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has been reversed since.

However, this book is both very readable and as comprehensive as the available evidence allows and will remain the basis for future researches. Anyone particularly interested in this group needs this book. For more general birdwatchers I suspect the price is rather high.

G.D. Field

Enquête Faunistique dans la Forêt du Mayombe et Check-liste des Oiseaux et des Mammifères du Congo. By F. Dowsett-Lemaire & R.J. Dowsett, 1989. Tauraco Research Report 2.

Flore et Faune du Bassin du Kouilou (Congo) et leur Exploitation. Ed. by R.J. Dowsett & F. Dowsett-Lemaire, 1991. Tauraco Research Report 4.

Both available from Tauraco Press, rue de Bois de Breux 194, B-4020 Jupille-Liège, Belgium.

Report no. 2 summarises the results of the authors' three weeks' field work in the eastern part of Mayombe in the dry season of 1989 (part of the UNDP/UNESCO "Projet Mayombe"). They added 50 species to the Congo bird list, of which 16 represent important range extensions southwards from Gabon. The most interesting discovery was of *Zoothera gurneyi* on a montane stepping-stone between Cameroon and Angola. The report includes the first attempt at a comprehensive review of the avifauna of Congo since Malbrant & Maclatchy's (1949). Their compilation listed 500 species but, in view of the under-explored nature of the country and the diversity of habitat, the authors predicted that this figure should increase to at least 700. Indeed, subsequent additions were recently published by these authors and P. Bulens (1993 *Malimbus* 15: 68-80).

Report no. 4 is a more substantial work. Commissioned as an environmental impact study for an onshore oil exploration drilling campaign by Conoco, the report presents the results of seven months' field work in the coastal basin area. The impact of human activity on soil erosion (a major problem in this area) is understated in this report. However, its value lies in the wealth of new data presented on the fauna. Half of the 22 chapters (especially those on mammals and hunting) are in French, the rest in English.

The first of the two ornithological chapters reviews the onshore distribution of mainly forest birds and includes observations on the ecology, behaviour and vocalisations of selected species. The songs of *Canirallus oculeus*, *Muscicapa olivascens* and *Pholidornis rushiae* are described for the first time. Based on

differences in voice and ecology, *Criniger calurus* and *C. ndussumensis* are treated as separate species. Sonograms are included for the latter and five other species. Some corrections to three *Phyllastrephus* species identifications on the *Alauda* recordings (disk ALA 10, no. 5) are proposed. The authors attribute the rarity of *Stephanoaetus coronatus*, *Guttera plumifera* and *Agelastes niger* in the area to intensive hunting pressure, while *Merops breweri* may be threatened by the loss of nest sites as large parts of the sandy savannas are planted with *Eucalyptus*, as well as snaring by villagers. Seasonal patterns of breeding and moult are reviewed. Wing lengths and weights of 76 species of ringed birds are tabulated.

The second ornithological chapter briefly reviews the status of seabirds off the Congo coast. One old (1943) record of *Phalacrocorax capensis* has been overlooked. The apparent absence in recent years of *Sula capensis* points to a decline in the wintering population in this area. Statistics of ringed Palaearctic terns (*Sterna hirundo*, *S. paradisaea* and *S. sandvicensis*) recovered on the West African coast between Cameroon and Angola are analysed. As elsewhere along the coast, trapping of terns by children is a problem here.

This report, which is lavishly illustrated with seven beautiful colour plates, is essential reading for anyone studying the avifauna of Congo and adjacent countries.

Peter Alexander-Marrack

A Directory of African Wetlands. By R.H. & J.S. Hughes, 1992. xxxiv + 820 pp., 48 maps. IUCN, Gland, United Nations Environment Programme, Nairobi & World Conservation Monitoring Centre, Cambridge. ISBN 2-88032-949-3. Paperback available from WCMC, 219c Huntingdon Rd., Cambridge CB3 0DL, U.K. or IUCN, rue Mauverney 28, CH-1196 Gland, Switzerland.

This book aims to identify important sites and "hydrological units" in order to guide conservation planners. Its data were gathered from maps and literature and from requests to country experts, from whom the response was generally poor. The detail given is limited by space, despite the book's 4 cm thickness, and two more detailed works are recommended, although only one of them is referenced!

Countries are considered in alphabetical order within regions, although no map is given to show where to find a particular country, and the contents list is so long (22 pages) that it is hard to use that to find your country. This makes the book's use unnecessarily difficult. WAOS's W Africa falls into three regions. The longest country account for W Africa, by far, is Zaire's (53 pp.), the shortest Guinea-Bissau's (4); most countries get 6-10. Each region has an interesting introduction of about 8 pages, covering topography, climate, wetland types, vegetation and fauna. This includes fascinating detail on the hydrological history of the area (although this might