



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



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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

be considered rather irrelevant to the stated purpose) and lengthy species lists. The bird lists are a little odd, including many common species (rendering it difficult to get at the conservation value) and non-wetland ones. There is some attempt to identify critical species in the country and wetland accounts, although full species lists are not repeated in these accounts; this is probably justifiable as there would otherwise be unnecessary repetition, but many of the fauna and flora sections in country accounts are still too brief, e.g. the importance of Guinea-Bissau for Palaearctic waders is acknowledged by half a sentence, and Banc d'Arguin's birds get only three sentences. Each country chapter has topography and climate sections (the latter seeming unnecessarily detailed) and a list of wetlands, then individual wetland descriptions include location, area, altitude, hydrology, biology, human impact and conservation status. Referencing is incomplete, although some key works are cited in the text.

A few little shortcomings suggest that the book was finalised in a hurry. The fauna sections in the regional introductions have occasional statements referring to countries not in that region, suggesting that the decision on how to group countries was changed at a late stage. In one introduction, many birds are referred to as "E only", with no indication of what that means (not east, nor Europe). The coverage of wetlands seems comprehensive, but many of those discussed are not mapped, although they could easily have been. Also, the maps often have names displaced or repeated in additional places.

Despite these quibbles, there are apparently few errors of fact and the book is definitely more readable than most WCMC publications. It is an indispensable source of reference on African wetlands.

Alan & Hilary Tye

Checklist of Birds of the Afrotropical and Malagasy Regions. Volume 1. Species limits and distribution. By R.J. Dowsett & A.D. Forbes-Watson, 1993. 374 pp. Tauraco Press, Liège. ISBN 2-87225-000-X.

A Contribution to the Distribution and Taxonomy of Afrotropical and Malagasy Birds. Ed. by R.J. Dowsett & F. Dowsett-Lemaire, 1993. 389 pp. Tauraco Research Report 5, Tauraco Press, Liège. ISBN 2-87225-010-X.

Paperbacks, £15 each incl. airmail postage, from Aves a.s.b.l., Maison de l'Environnement, Rue de la Régence 36, B-4000 Liège, Belgium.

These two important works (along with a promised Volume 2) are destined to replace White (1960-65) as the commonly-used basis for Afrotropical bird taxonomy. In this