



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



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might help to promote conservation by increasing eco-tourism, it could also have a negative effect, by bringing birders into conflict with local authorities.

Country coverage is highly uneven. Kenya gets the most pages (26, with most of its sites getting more space than entire W African countries), while Equatorial Guinea and Guinea-Bissau get least (1.5 pages each—bear in mind that half a page for each country is a map). Three countries are omitted (Western Sahara, Lesotho, Swaziland) despite the claim that two of them are included in the South Africa account (they aren't). Countries with <10 pages are not covered adequately, and that applies to 19 of the 24 W African states. It is astonishing that countries like Cape Verde (2), Ghana (2, with a map that shows none of the sites mentioned) and Mali (3.5) are dismissed so briefly. It is precisely such poorly known countries that need a guide of this kind. In W Africa, the guide only approaches adequacy for Cameroon (16), Gabon (14), Gambia (10) and Ivory Coast (12).

This latter selection reveals the book's main purpose: to describe the smallest number of sites which would enable a lister to get the birds of a region most easily. The book is definitely not a guide to a selection of the best places in every country in Africa. So it is only worth buying if you suffer from a twitch and want to know which countries to visit to get your lifers fastest, or if you happen to be visiting some of the better-covered countries. For any of the others, it would be possible to make notes very quickly from a library copy, or standing by the shelves in the local bookshop. Even for the more fully-treated countries, the amount of information presented inevitably falls short of that in country checklists or guides, which are available for many countries in Africa. Still, non-listers, planning a less single-minded holiday, might find it useful as a selective guide to a few sites not dealt with by general guidebooks, which could add interest to the trip.

Alan Tye

Les Oiseaux de l'Archipel du Cap Vert/As Aves do Arquipélago de Cabo Verde. By R. de Naurois, 1994. Pp. xvii + 188, 10 colour plates. Instituto de Investigação Científica Tropical, Lisbon. ISBN 972-672-628-X, hardback. Obtainable from Centro de Documentação e Informação do IICT, Rua de Jau 47, 1300 Lisboa, Portugal.

The Birds of the Cape Verde Islands. By C.J. Hazevoet. Pp. 192, 48 colour plates. Check-list 13, British Ornithologists' Union, Tring. ISBN 0-907446-17-5, hardback, £17.

The Cape Verde Islands are of interest because they lie on the western margin of the Old World, in the region where the Palaearctic and Afrotropical biota overlap

and in a position in the Atlantic roughly comparable to that of the Galapagos Islands in the Pacific. In fact, although it has seldom been noticed, Charles Darwin first encountered sibling species of passerine there. Most of the information about them has already been reviewed in the massive *History of the Birds of the Cape Verde Islands* by D.A. & W.M. Bannerman (1968, Oliver & Boyd, Edinburgh), but that is now out of print and costly, so it was time for an up-to-date summary and here are two, of different sorts.

The main new contribution in the Bannermans' work was the preliminary reports on a series of visits to all the islands by the Abbé René de Naurois, from 1962 to 1969. It was said that he would be publishing more details himself, but these have taken the form of over 30 short notes on individual species and topics, which he has now summarized in parallel French and Portuguese texts, in what is essentially an illustrated field guide. It includes brief accounts of the geography, vegetation and avifauna, and one-page descriptions of each species (under the headings vernacular names, wing length, description, distribution, habitat, food, voice, reproduction) with coloured figures of the birds and their closest mainland allies, a summary of some biological conclusions and a limited bibliography, mainly listing his own works.

The author of the second book, C.J. Hazevoet, first visited the islands with a birdwatching tour in 1986, married a Cabo-Verdian, and has been intermittently resident there, visiting all the islands, since 1988. He also summarizes, at greater length, the history, geography, climate, vegetation, habitats, breeding, migration, zoogeography and conservation of the islands and their birds. The main news is that, while after recent droughts the larks have been spreading and the sparrows fluctuating, the endemic Cane Warbler *Acrocephalus brevipennis* has disappeared from two of the three islands where it occurred, and some seabirds, notably the Magnificent Frigatebird *Fregata magnificens*, are also reduced. Little attention is paid to the many other past visiting ornithologists, to field notes on the birds, or to the peculiarities of the avifauna. Instead, most effort is devoted to promoting a new cladistic taxonomy, whereby three endemic species and 16 races are reduced to 14 "phylogenetic species" (and my classification of the gadfly-petrels is misrepresented on p. 155).

Since I first proposed that the B.O.U. publish these check-lists, and requests are made in them for records in the name of the Union, I should like to record my concern at the way in which, instead of being used as a means of elucidating the normal avifauna and features of biological interest of the area concerned, they are now becoming erratic tourist tick-lists, often using unconventional taxonomy and nomenclature, as in the similar case of the use of an alphabetical order of genera and species in the Gambia list (M.E.J. Gore, *Birds of The Gambia*, 1990). It seems time these currently unsupervised B.O.U. productions were subjected to peer review.