



EDITED BY ROBERT M. ZINK

*The following critiques express the opinions of the individual evaluators regarding the strengths, weaknesses, and value of the books they review. As such, the appraisals are subjective assessments and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the editors or any official policy of the American Ornithologists' Union.*

*The Auk* 112(4):1081–1083, 1995

**Checklist of Birds of the Afrotropical and Malagasy Regions. Volume 1. Species Limits and Distribution.**—R. J. Dowsett and A. D. Forbes-Watson. 1993. Tauraco Press. Aves a.s.b.l., Maison de l'Environnement, Rue de la Régence 36, B-4000 Liège, Belgium. 374 pp. ISBN 2-87225-000-X. \$36.00.

**A Contribution to the Distribution and Taxonomy of Afrotropical and Malagasy Birds.**—Edited by R. J. Dowsett and F. Dowsett-Lemaire. 1993. Tauraco Press. 389 pp. 11 text figures (sonagrams). ISBN 2-87225-010-X. \$36.00.—The publication of these two works has been eagerly awaited by all ornithologists working on African birds. The three authors have had extensive field experience in Africa spanning many years and, thus, are eminently qualified to produce a new checklist of birds for the region. They have an intuitive “feel” for avian relationships based on intimate knowledge of the birds themselves, which they ably integrate with their work on museum skins—this “field taxonomy” is not to be taken lightly. Françoise Dowsett-Lemaire is a prolific tape-recorder who has shed much light on avian relationships with her vocalization studies. In the past few years, she and her husband R. J. Dowsett have done considerable exploratory work in little-known forests of Nigeria, Cameroon, Congo and Rwanda (Dowsett 1989, 1990). Alec Forbes-Watson has studied the birds of every major island in the Malagasy Region. Previous checklists for the Afrotropical and Malagasy regions by Sclater (1924–1930) and for the Afrotropics by White (1960–1965) were monumental achievements, but were based mainly on specimens. Modern ornithologists will appreciate the breath of fresh air from field studies that permeates the present works. As with previous lists, the authors decided to limit African coverage to birds occurring south of the Sahara. The Malagasy Region, even though not part of Africa, was tacked on “as a matter of practical convenience,” and forms a useful addition. Another extra is the inclusion of southwest Arabia (the Yemens), whose avifauna has clearly African affinities, and the Cape Verde Is.

Volume 1 of the *Checklist* is concerned with species limits and distribution; volume 2 (Dowsett in press) will provide a full synonymy of all species and races, with original literature citation and a type-locality gazetteer. The core of volume 1 is the systematic list. Each species entry contains a lot of information compressed into two or sometimes three lines. Following the scientific name and original citation is a selective synonymy, which includes the genus or other group in which the bird has also been placed, as well as a list of forms that sometimes are considered good species by other authors, each with a superscript number referring to the work where the classification is discussed. The work referred to is frequently the companion volume reviewed here, which is intended to be used in conjunction with the *Checklist*. This is a big improvement over those checklists that simply list the species without giving reasons for the author's taxonomic decisions. Next come references to a selected few accounts in the current literature; for instance, under the bulbul *Phyllastrephus terrestris* we find BA4:325 PG3:698 R569, meaning *The Birds of Africa*, vol.4, p. 325, Mackworth-Praed and Grant Series 3, bird 698 and Roberts (=Maclean 1985) bird no. 569. Next follow English and French names, in each case with a widely used alternative name in parentheses where one exists, with emphasis on “widely used”; species with a wide distribution in Africa go by different names on different parts of the continent, and it would have been impractical to list all of these. The authors take the view that English names should reflect local usage, and have adopted the names found in the standard literature of the part of Africa on which a bird's range is centered (e.g. Britton [1980] for East Africa and Maclean [1985] for southern Africa). In this they are deferring to the long-established resident human populations in these areas, many of whom resist change. This is a different slant from that taken by Sibley and Monroe (1990), Short et al. (1990), and the editors of *The Birds of Africa*, who prefer to standardize names on a world basis, which often requires changing some long-established local names. The authors have in general not accepted the “in-

vented novelties" that often result from these changes. While I personally lean towards retaining local names wherever possible, especially if colorful, and am not one of those revisionists who are always trying to "improve" the many inaccurate and inappropriate English names in use around the world, I do feel certain changes are warranted. For instance, the five warblers in the genus *Parisoma* (now often merged in *Sylvia*), because of their titlike foraging methods and (originally) uncertain affinities were named tit-warblers in East Africa and tit-babblers in South Africa. While the former is reasonable, the latter is due for a change. By retaining the name tit-babbler for birds that are neither tits nor babblers, the authors missed an opportunity. I will refrain from further comment on this hotly debated topic, except to say that most of the English names on this checklist are well-chosen and are a reasonable compromise between various schools of thought. Providing French names for every African bird must have taken a lot of time and effort. The list of French names for birds of the world published in Gerfaut by Devillers (1976–1980) ended at the beginning of the passerines, and many birds in non-francophone parts of Africa lacked French names, so names had to be invented. Unfortunately, these efforts may not get the recognition they deserve because they are likely to be overshadowed by the official list of French names for birds of the world (Devillers and Ouellet 1993), which was published simultaneously. There are considerable differences between these lists. For instance, the ground-thrushes (genus *Zoothera*) are appropriately named "grive terrestre" here, while on the French list they are called simply "grive," along with several other thrushes, including *Catharus*; flycatchers in the genus *Batis* are called *Batis*, while on the French list they are all *Pririt*. Following the French name is a letter referring to a published tape recording, and finally a coded species reference number. Allospecies of superspecies are connected by brackets, and family headings include the number of species in Africa and the number of those which are endemic. The sequence of families is the traditional one used by Campbell and Lack (1985), with a few modifications, and not the radically different one of Sibley and Monroe (1990).

This checklist occupies only the first part of the book. The second part is a giant distribution table. The species are presented again, this time with a column for each African and Malagasy country, and a symbol denoting the status of each species (resident, migrant, etc.) in every country where it occurs. One can only guess at the amount of research that must have gone into the production of such a table. As an added bonus, there is an appendix with a similar distribution table for birds occurring on the small islands of the central and south Atlantic, from Ascension to the Tristan da Cunha group and the Prince Edward Islands.

The second work reviewed here, the *Contribution*,

is in two parts. In the first part, the data from the distribution table in the *Checklist* are rearranged to present species lists for each country. At the end of each one is a list of major references used in its preparation, providing documentary evidence for the distributional records. This section of the book is of necessity very bulky (322 pp.), because widely-distributed species are repeated under each country. However, it is well worth the space as it is a valuable cross-reference to the distribution table; the task of assembling country lists from the table has been done for you. Part 2 contains 58 pages of comments on the taxonomy of selected species. This is the "meat" behind the *Checklist*, and it will be eagerly devoured by all African ornithologists. Production of a major checklist such as this necessitates frequent choices between alternative treatments. The authors' choices are well-reasoned and so well documented that this section amounts in effect to a bibliography of recent African taxonomy. I found myself agreeing with most of their decisions, and for those that I did not agree with I had to admit they presented a good case. Of particular interest are the sonagrams, which are used by the authors to support or contradict previous treatments. For instance, the voice of *Otus senegalensis* is shown to differ at the species level from that of *O. scops*, contra Fry et al. (1988), while that of *Caprimulgus nigriscapularis* is so similar to that of *C. pectoralis* that they are probably conspecific, again contra Fry et al. (1988). Side-by-side comparison of sonagrams shows the calls of the rockjumpers *Chaetops frenatus* and *C. aurantius* to be so similar that the two taxa are likely to be conspecific, which goes against current thinking in southern Africa. However, the reverse may be the case with the two canaries *Serinus totta* and *S. (tottta) symonsi*, whose calls clearly appear from the sonagrams to be different. These discussions are absolute "must" reading for all African taxonomists, whether they agree with the decisions or not.

In sum, these two works are giant data banks. They provide a vast amount of information on the distribution and taxonomy of African birds, and they are written by highly respected and experienced workers who know what they are talking about. These are another of the landmarks in African ornithology that have been appearing with increasing frequency in recent years, and it is fitting that they were published by Tauraco Press, which was founded by Bob Dowsett and Françoise Dowsett-Lemaire. The volumes clearly belong in all natural-history libraries, and should also be owned by preparers of local checklists, editors of bird journals, and writers of field guides and books on African birds. Serious birders will also want an updated checklist of African and Malagasy birds to know what birds they can count on their lists as good species. There is something for everyone here, and I regard possession of these works as mandatory for anyone with a serious interest in African birds.

## LITERATURE CITED

- BRITTON, P. L. (Ed.). 1980. Birds of East Africa. East African Natural History Society, Nairobi.
- CAMPBELL, D., AND E. LACK. 1985. A dictionary of birds. Poyser, Calton.
- DEVILLERS, P., AND H. OUELLET. 1993. Noms Français des Oiseaux du Monde avec les Equivalents Latins et Anglais. Editions Multimondes, Québec, and Editions Chabaud, Bayonne, France.
- DOWSETT, R. J. (Ed.). 1989. Enquête Faunistique dans la Forêt du Mayombe et Check-Liste des Oiseaux et des Mammifères du Congo. Tauraco Research Report No. 2.
- DOWSETT, R. J. (Ed.). 1990. Enquête Faunistique et Floristique dans la Forêt de Nyungwe, Rwanda. Tauraco Research Report No. 3.
- FRY, C. H., S. KEITH, AND E. K. URBAN. 1988. The birds of Africa, vol. 3. Academic Press, London.
- MACKWORTH-PRAED, C. W., AND C. H. B. GRANT. 1973. Birds of west-central and western Africa, vol. 2. Longmans, London.
- MACLEAN, G. L. 1985. Roberts' birds of southern Africa. John Voelcker Bird Book Fund, Cape Town.
- SCLATER, W. L. 1924, 1930. Systema Avium Aethiopicarum, parts 1 and 2. British Ornithologists' Union, London.
- SHORT, L. L., J. F. M. HORNE, AND C. MURINGOGICHUKI. 1990. Annotated check-list of the birds of East Africa. Proc. West. Found. Vertebr. Zool. 4:61-246.
- SIBLEY, C. G., AND B. L. MONROE, JR. 1990. Distribution and taxonomy of birds of the world. Yale Univ. Press, New Haven.
- WHITE, C. M. N. 1960. A checklist of the Ethiopian Muscicapidae (Sylviinae). Part I. Occas. Pap. Nat. Mus. S. Rhod. 3(24B):399-430.
- WHITE, C. M. N. 1961. A revised checklist of African broadbills, pittas, larks, swallows, wagtails and pipits. Government Printer, Lusaka, Zambia.
- WHITE, C. M. N. 1962. A checklist of the Ethiopian Muscicapidae (Sylviinae). Part II. Occas. Pap. Nat. Mus. S. Rhod. 3(26B):653-738.
- WHITE, C. M. N. 1962. A revised checklist of the African shrikes, orioles, drongos, starlings, crows, waxwings, cuckoo-shrikes, bulbuls, accentors, thrushes and babblers. Government Printer, Lusaka, Zambia.
- WHITE, C. M. N. 1963. A revised checklist of African flycatchers, tits, tree creepers, sunbirds, white-eyes, honey eaters, buntings, finches, weavers and waxbills. Government Printer, Lusaka, Zambia.
- WHITE, C. M. N. 1965. A revised checklist of African non-passerine birds. Government Printer, Lusaka, Zambia.

STUART KEITH, *Department of Ornithology, American Museum of Natural History, Central Park West and 79th St., New York, New York 10024, USA.*

*The Auk* 112(4):1083, 1995

**Localization and Ontogeny of Peptidergic Neurons in Birds. Comparative Studies on the Releasing and Inhibiting Hormones in Birds and Mammals.**—J. Józsa and B. Mess. 1993. Academic Publisher, Budapest, Hungary. 96 pp. No price given.—Ever since Donald Farner's and his collaborators' innovative studies (1960-1964) focussed the attention of avian researchers on the role of neurosecretion in releasing migratory behavior in birds, the localization of the neurosecretory units has remained an important aspect of avian physiological anatomy. We learn from this book that not only those neurons releasing gonadotropic neurosecretions originate in the anterior hypothalamic area. The research on which the present book is based found that, while this area produces the most kinds of regulatory and inhibitory hormones, such hormones also are produced in the limbic system and in the brainstem. The authors found that immunoreactive cells or cell groups are found throughout the whole central nervous system. The origin, development, and functioning of these units is studied with immunocytochemical methods using domestic fowl and domestic mallards, and the results are compared with mammals (rat, mouse, and human) in similar stages of development.—MIKLOS D. F. UDVARDY, *Department of Biological Sciences, California State University, Sacramento, California 95819, USA.*

*The Auk* 112(4):1083-1084, 1995

**The West Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas.**—Albert R. Buckelew, Jr., and George A. Hall. 1994. University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. xii + 215 pp. 12 text figures and distribution maps for 171 species. ISBN 0-8229-3850-2. Cloth. \$27.95 + \$3.00 mailing.—Fieldwork for this atlas was carried out for six years (1984-1989) and involved some 300 volunteers. The results were: 171 confirmed breeding species (and two *Vermivora* hybrids) and 8 species of uncertain breeding status. Each confirmed species is discussed on a single page which includes text, usually a line drawing by George M. Sutton, a map (blocks contain symbols of breeding status), and a box table presenting the number of blocks in which the species was recorded (from "observed" only to "confirmed breeding"). The text contains general distribution information, trends from Breeding Bird Surveys (1966-1989), and general comments on nest sites and preferred habitats. In a pocket on the inside back cover are useful map overlays depicting biogeographic regions, forest types, topographic features, and climatic information.

Compared with other state atlases that I have examined, the text is disappointingly meager as regards a discussion of actual atlas findings. Usually the text consumes less than one-half a page and, even then, discussion of atlas results often appears in a sentence or two. For several species (e.g. Ring-necked Pheasant, Yellow Warbler, and American Redstart), the text contains no reference to the atlas fieldwork. Because data from different states are likely to differ, I would like to have seen details from West Virginia about "confirmed breeding," such as the numbers of nests with eggs or young, mean numbers of eggs, cowbird parasitism, and exact placement of nests. No information is given about a "confirmed" breeding Nashville Warbler, apparently only the second record for the state. Most pages contain much blank space, which, even if wrapped around the state's Western Panhandle, should have included more discussion of the atlas results.

Coupled with Hall's *West Virginia Birds* (1983), the atlas maps will probably be useful to birders in the state.—DAVID W. JOHNSTON, 5219 Concordia Street, Fairfax, Virginia 22032, USA.

---

*The Auk* 112(4):1084–1085, 1995

**The Birds of North America.**—A. Poole, P. Stettenheim, and F. Gill (Eds.). Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, American Ornithologists' Union, Washington, D.C. ISSN 1061-5466.—If you are uninterested in birds or happen to have memorized everything there is to know about North American birds, then this series is not for you and you need read no further. For the rest of us, this collection represents an important resource that we will consult on a regular basis for years to come.

The high quality of *The Birds of North America* (BNA) species accounts is the result of the efforts of the individual authors and the intelligent manner in which the entire project was established. First, rather than having a single ornithologist attempt to synthesize the available knowledge for all North American species, specialists were selected to write the reviews for each species. This means that each review was written by the person or persons most familiar with the subject species. Furthermore, because there are multiple authors, the entire project will be completed in a reasonable period of time. Nevertheless, some authors are not as prompt as others, so the editors decided not to wait for the very last review to be written, but instead are publishing each species review as it is completed. The reviews are concise (generally between 15 and 30 pages) and follow a standard format intended to summarize the available knowl-

edge for each species. Indeed the standardization of the reviews is one of the greatest strengths of this series. Each review contains the following major headings: distinguishing characteristics; distribution; systematics; migration; habitat; food habits; sounds; appearance; behavior; breeding; demography and populations; conservation and management; and measurements. In addition, each review contains a color photograph of the species, a range map, a figure summarizing the annual cycle (molt, breeding, and migration), a table of standard measurements, and often line drawings of various behaviors. Perhaps of most importance is the inclusion of an extensive reference section, which enables readers to delve more deeply into the original citations from which the BNA review was synthesized. The range maps provided are useful, but I am disappointed that subspecies ranges were not indicated as well. Although the avian subspecies is an ill-defined taxonomic unit, the description of subspecies is an indication that there exists morphological, behavioral, and/or ecological variability within the species that may be important to ornithologists.

An important consequence of the standardized format for BNA reviews is the identification of aspects of life history about which we still know very little. Nearly all reviews, even of common species, contain at least one subsection that consists of a single sentence "No information available." and several additional sections which are very short owing to the limited nature of available information. Because the review format is standardized, the reader can be certain that the lack of discussion about a topic reflects how little is known. A casual reading of several reviews is sufficient to convince the reader that much remains to be discovered about North American birds. Indeed, as an avian systematist I find myself a little embarrassed by the poor state of avian systematics that is so clearly illustrated by the Systematics sections in BNA reviews.

The reviews published to date have been of very high quality. Even when the standardized format forces authors to synthesize knowledge in a conceptual field outside their own area of expertise, they have consistently produced good summaries. Of course, as good as these summaries are, they are not absolutely complete. In several instances I found additional relevant references that were not cited and that contained information not otherwise present in the review. However, as a single reference attempting to summarize the available knowledge and to provide access to the original literature, these reviews are without parallel.

The BNA reviews are written primarily for a scientifically literate audience. The format selected corresponds to current areas of significant research interest, scientific terminology is used where appropriate, and the writing style is concise. However, much of the information is still easily accessible to amateurs.

To improve the ability of the lay public to use this series, the editors might consider providing a glossary of terms. I anticipate that use of this series will fall into three broad categories. First, individuals of all educational backgrounds will find this to be the best place to turn to for general information about a specific species of bird. I expect BNA reviews to be heavily utilized by undergraduates enrolled in ornithology courses and by ornithologists attempting to answer those pesky questions posed by inquisitive birders. Second, researchers who have selected a North American bird species as a study organism would do well to read the BNA review for that species as an excellent introduction to what is known about all aspects of its life history. Finally, students looking for research projects will find that every BNA account clearly identifies a suite of questions about which we have little or no information. As a graduate advisor I view the BNA reviews as a wonderful source of these projects. Indeed, I believe that it is this clear indication of where more research is needed that will likely be the most significant contribution of this series. Without question this series is a must for every serious library.

Bent's *Life Histories*, most published in the first half of this century, represent the only completed set of publications that attempt to summarize our knowledge of North American bird species. However, our knowledge of the North American avifauna has improved dramatically over the last 40 years and, as a result, Bent's *Life Histories* are now seriously outdated. This new synthesis of current knowledge provided by BNA is desperately needed.

In summary, *The Birds of North America* series is a fundamentally important effort that synthesizes what is known about North American bird species and will help guide future ornithological research. It belongs in the library of every serious ornithologist studying North American birds and in every biological research library.—SCOTT M. LANYON, *Bell Museum of Natural History, 100 Ecology Building, University of Minnesota, St. Paul, Minnesota 55108, USA.*

---

*The Auk* 112(4):1085–1086, 1995

**The Birds of North America.**—A. Poole, P. Stettenheim, and F. Gill (Eds.). 1992–1993. Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and American Ornithologists' Union, Washington, D.C. ISSN 1061-5466.

Payne, R. B. 1992. Indigo Bunting, No. 4.  
Robertson, R. J., B. J. Stutchbury, and R. R. Cohen. 1992. Tree Swallow, No. 11.

Brown, C. R., A. M. Knott, and E. J. Damrose. 1992. Violet-Green Swallow, no. 14.  
Gibbs, J. P., F. A. Reid, and S. M. Melvin. 1992. Least Bittern, no. 17.  
Eaton, S. W. 1992. Wild Turkey, no. 22.  
Benkman, C. W. 1992. White-winged Crossbill, no. 27.  
Mueller, A. M. 1992. Inca Dove, no. 28.  
Tacha, T. C., S. A., Nesbitt, and P. A. Vohs. 1992. Sandhill Crane, no. 31.  
Csada, R. D., and M. Brigham. 1992. Common Poorwill, no. 32.  
Schroeder, M. A., and L. A. Robb. 1993. Greater Prairie Chicken, no. 36.  
Naugler, C. T. 1993. American Tree Sparrow, no. 37.  
Strickland, D., and H. Ouellet. 1993. Gray Jay, no. 40.

*The Birds of North America* is an ambitious ongoing project, jointly sponsored by the American Ornithologists' Union and the Academy of Natural Sciences, that will publish comprehensive summaries of current knowledge about all of the breeding birds of the continent. Under the guidance of executive director Frank B. Gill, managing editor Alan Poole, and associate editors Peter Stettenheim and Kenn Kaufman, the project has been generating separate species accounts of about 10 to 30 pages each since 1991. As specialists on each species complete preparation of their accounts, they are published in bimonthly batches, regardless of systematic order. Inquiries about subscription options can be sent to BNA, P.O. Box 687, Holmes, Pennsylvania 19043. Similar efforts by the American Society of Mammalogists and the American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists are underway. All three projects are efforts to organize information about the distribution, systematics, ecology, population biology, and behavior of the vertebrate fauna of the continent at the specific level and to make it widely available in fascicles. The societies rely on the cooperative spirit of their members, who volunteer to write accounts.

For ornithologists, the series will complement the *Handbook of North American Birds* edited by Ralph Palmer (vols. 1–5, 1962–1988, Yale University Press, New Haven). The fascicle format has the advantages that accounts for individual species can be updated separately and that subscribers have flexibility in what they can order.

This review very briefly covers 12 accounts (listed above). Each one has a color photograph, a distribution map, other illustrations as appropriate, and a full bibliography. A standard format facilitates comparisons across species, but editorial flexibility has allowed authors to emphasize particular areas of research.

*The Birds of North America* project has tremendous educational value. The accounts contain concise summaries of several major ongoing research programs: Robert Payne's studies of song learning in the Indigo

Bunting, Raleigh Robertson's and David Winkler's work with the breeding system of Tree Swallows that nest in boxes, F. E. Wilson's studies of photorefractoriness in the Tree Sparrow, and Daniel Strickland's studies of food storage in the Gray Jay. Such information raises many new questions for researchers. Why was the peak population of the Greater Prairie Chicken in Nebraska during the transition between native prairie and cropland? Why are the Sandhill Crane, Indigo Bunting, Tree Swallow, and Inca Dove increasing their populations and expanding their geographic ranges? How will the White-winged Crossbill, which is already adapted to dependence on a highly variable food resource, be affected by the harvest of mature black spruce trees all across Canada?

A large readership will use this series as the most indispensable current reference on each species. Conservation biologists and managers are already looking to the accounts for educated guesses about what environmental factors are regulating populations. Comparisons among accounts will suggest where new investigations are needed, and they may lead to new biological insights. The value of the 120 accounts (organized into three volumes) completed to date is already substantially more than the sum of its separate parts.

As of November 1994, the project had approximately 1,000 subscribers from university libraries to nature centers, federal and state agencies, ornithological clubs and societies, public libraries, and many individuals. The objective is to complete the entire task by 2001—720 accounts that could be purchased either separately or in 18 volumes. If you would like to write an account, contact Alan Poole (telephone 215-299-1042 or by e-mail at poole@say.acnatsci.org).—FRANCES C. JAMES, *Department of Biological Science, Florida State University, Tallahassee, Florida 32306, USA.*

facing pages. Species' data summarize aspects of breeding and feeding ecology using a mixture of pictorial symbols and text, with additional information on patterns of migration, conservation status and references. This format works well and allows the reader, with practice, to assimilate a great deal of information in a short space of time. The essays are subject rather than species-based and are organized to appear alongside the most relevant species or species groups. So for example, polyandry is discussed beside the sandpipers and "bird badges" beside the tits. A wide range of topics is covered from how do birds fly to social and mating systems. The writing style is easy and the authors avoid technical language.

The authors succeed in their stated aim of filling the gap between the standard identification guides and more detailed ornithological studies. Species' data represent a useful source of information for comparative studies, although I would have liked more information on basic life history, such as body size and longevity. The essays are certainly well written and researched, but the most obvious criticism of the book is the bias towards American studies (and many essays appear to have been taken directly from the American version of the handbook). Although much of this research is relevant, a number of important issues in European conservation and ornithology are not discussed, and key references are omitted. I have a number of minor criticisms. One is that the unusual format dictates that the essays lack a clear structure, and I would have preferred a separate and more structured series of essays. Latin names are only presented in the essays for non-European species, but this system frequently breaks down and, in some cases, the names are simply wrong. An index of scientific names would solve this problem. Finally, the illustrations are poor and often inaccurate.

Despite such criticisms, the handbook is an extremely interesting read and a useful reference. I would recommend it to all birdwatchers who would like to learn more about the natural history of birds.—RICHARD D. GREGORY, *BTO, The National Centre for Ornithology, The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk, IP24 2PU, United Kingdom.*

---

*The Auk* 112(4):1086, 1995

**The Birdwatcher's Handbook: A Guide to the Natural History of the Birds of Britain and Europe.**—Paul R. Ehrlich, David S. Dobkin, Darryl Wheye and Stuart L. Pimm. 1994. Oxford University Press, New York. x + 660 pp. 30 black-and-white illustrations. ISBN 0-19-858407-5. Paper. \$22.00 and £12.95—The handbook contains information on the natural history of over 500 European species alongside a smaller number of short essays, which taken together provide a comprehensive introduction to bird biology and behavior. The format is unusual with species' data appearing on even-numbered pages and essays on the

---

*The Auk* 112(4):1086–1087, 1995

**A Stillness in the Pines.**—Robert W. McFarlane. 1992. W. W. Norton & Company, New York, New York. 270 pp., 28 text figures. ISBN 0-393-03066-0. \$22.95.—The extinction of a species is influenced by a complex of human and biological factors. In the fight to save endangered species, scientists are often limited by their lack of biological knowledge and

their lack of skill in fighting political battles. Robert McFarlane is well-acquainted with these limitations in the struggle to understand and save the endangered Red-cockaded Woodpecker, and addresses these issues effectively in his book. In the early chapters, he presents an overview of woodpeckers, succession, and the causes of extinction. These chapters are useful for the intended "educated layperson" audience to begin to appreciate the interconnections inherent within ecosystems, setting the stage for later discussions. These general chapters, however, do not start to integrate the focal species with the information presented and the transitions between chapters are not smooth. A more effective strategy might have been to present more details on succession specifically in southern pine forests and describe briefly how the Red-cockaded Woodpecker compares to other woodpeckers.

Much of the rest of the book describes the life history of the Red-cockaded Woodpecker, and how its specialized use of living pines has made it particularly vulnerable to management practices and extinction. These chapters present a very readable and interesting description of the ecology of this fascinating species, and are the major strength of the book. Two important points—the unique, relatively complete data for Red-cockaded Woodpeckers and the importance of natural-history data for management—are brought out. The ecological and behavioral data are presented effectively through the detailed information and general summary presented within each chapter. For the lay reader, there is a useful discussion of how the scientific method is applied, and how researchers think about problems and try to solve them.

A strong case is presented for the impact of Red-cockaded Woodpeckers as agents of pest control, although this point is not revisited when discussing strategies for influencing species conservation. In this section of the book (Chapter 9 of 12), the author really starts to bring in (and criticize) the players in Red-cockaded Woodpecker conservation. At this point, the "educated layperson" may begin to feel a bit lost if he/she is not familiar with the management practices that are referred to, as little or no description of them is provided until later in the book. A succinct summary of the listing process for endangered species, and the Red-cockaded Woodpecker specifically, then sets the stage for a discussion of the problematic development of a recovery plan and subsequent revision. The actions of the parties responsible for the recovery plan and (unsuccessful) attempt to designate critical habitat are enlightening and clearly stated, although somewhat difficult to follow. This is in part due to the complicated nature of controversies involving public and private agencies, but better summaries of the later chapters would save the reader from feeling like he/she is experiencing first-hand the frustrations of implementing environmental policy.

The last chapter describes recent episodes of population decline in three areas of the species' range, and further alerts the reader to the negative effects of U.S. Forest Service management practices, which culminated in a suit brought by the Sierra Club. The description of the suit and subsequent court action are an interesting read, and McFarlane's involvement with more than the biology of the Red-cockaded Woodpecker adds an important dimension to a treatise on an endangered species. The book ends by making a strong plea for cooperation and concern to secure the future of the Red-cockaded Woodpecker, and rightly points out the need for biologists to expand their actions into political and social realms to prevent the silence of extinction.

Overall, the book is an understandable, informative introduction to the Red-cockaded Woodpecker and the conservation challenges surrounding endangered species, and would be useful for community libraries and for individuals with an interest in Red-cockaded Woodpeckers. One of the strengths of this book is that the protection actions for an endangered species are summarized with enough biological background that the reader has some chance to assess policies from a biological point of view. As examples of the routes of controversy in the conservation of endangered species tend to be rare, this book would also be a useful addition to college and museum libraries.—GWENDA L. BREWER, *Department of Biology, Frostburg State University, Frostburg, Maryland 21532, USA.*

---

*The Auk* 112(4):1087-1088, 1995

**Palaearctic Birds. A Checklist of the Birds of Europe, North Africa and Asia North of the Foothills of the Himalayas.**—Mark Beaman. 1994. Harrier Publications, Stonyhurst, England. 168 pp. ISBN 0-9523391-0-2. Paper. £12.50.—This volume reviews taxonomic and distributional changes that have occurred since Vaurie's and Voous's works, now several decades old. For simplicity in assimilation, Beaman follows the taxonomic order used by Voous.

Beaman does a good job of defining geographic limits and includes areas traditionally not considered Palaearctic, such as southwestern Arabia. The reasons for including such areas appear sound because they represent interfaces between regions. Excluding them from consideration simply because the avifauna from another region is heavy represented would truncate portions of the range of species that are clearly part of the Palaearctic fauna. The choice to deal aggressively with areas of interface has resulted in a more complete treatment of the geographic range occupied by Palaearctic birds.

The Systematic List includes scientific name, English name, and alternative (English) name(s). Status codes (e.g. vagrant) are included where necessary, and an asterisk signifies that an explanation about the (English) name is given. A more pertinent use for the asterisk would have been to signify comments in the Taxonomic Notes section, which is a welcome and well referenced addition to the checklist. A symbol denoting treatment in the Notes on Distributional Status section also would have been useful. A short section of Omitted Species is included, along with the reasons for exclusion from the checklist. Most often dubious records or misidentified specimens were the reason for exclusion, and references to the original sight records or correct identification is included.

Beaman devotes a full 40 pages to English names, above the amount of space given to English names in the Systematic List. I personally find this extensive treatment of English names superfluous and distract-

ing. Knowing the English name, or its alternatives, and the relevant history in most cases will not be of use in the field; whereas, the scientific names contained in the Systematic List and Taxonomic Notes section would allow you to communicate with ornithologists speaking any language. Because the checklist would be of value to nonornithologists and to ornithologists dealing with laypersons in a non-English speaking country as well, I think a more complete work would have eliminated the alternative English names column and included several columns with common names from languages that cover large areas of the checklist (perhaps Russian and Arabic).

My few criticisms aside, I find this to be a useful volume that should be considered for college and museum libraries, or to anyone working closely with Palearctic birds.—GARY VOELKER, *Burke Museum, Box 353010, University of Washington, Seattle, Washington 98195, USA.*

## *Announcement*



**New Editor Selected.**—Thomas E. Martin has been selected as the new Editor of the *Auk*. All new manuscripts should be sent to: Editorial Office, *The Auk*, Montana Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit, NS 205, University of Montana, Missoula, Montana 59812,

USA. Submit five hard copies of the manuscript and include an ASCII version and a wordprocessor version (preferably Word or WordPerfect; identify the software and the type of computer used) on floppy disk (3.5-inch disk preferable).