

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor:

Wow, hot rivets were popping all over the place as I read the timely "The Drying of a Wetland" article in the Summer 1990 Issue (Volume 44, Number 2).

The rivet message that zinged right to me, is the cold fact that we are faced with a worse disaster on the Platte River in Nebraska.

If any more dams are built on the North Platte and South Platte Rivers, and especially if the city of Denver, Colorado, and its all powerful Water Board succeeds in constructing Two Forks Dam, the Whooping Crane and 90% of the Sandhill Cranes will be very seriously affected. It could be very close to a knock-out blow.

Also, what effect do the dams on the Arkansas River in Colorado have on Cheyenne Bottoms?

Winston William Brockner
Evergreen, Colorado

To The Editor:

Birders who seek all the world's avian families or Africa-hounds like me must sooner or later go the Madagascar, one of the most unique places on earth. I've just returned from a tour to Madagascar, Reunion, Mauritius and the Seychelles. It was extremely successful in terms of seeing all of Madagascar's endemic bird families and all the endemic species of the other islands. However, I'm writing not as a lister but as one who values the commitment of *American Birds* to international conservation.

As one actively involved in the movement, I feel strongly that the two most important elements of preserving habitat and wildlife in the Third World are 1) ensuring that the benefits of conservation reach the local people, and 2) promoting sustainable development. Ecotourism is a key vehicle for attaining both of these objectives. The National Audubon Society is to be commended for its role in pursuing these ends with its Foreign Assistance Action Project, which promotes sustainable development, its Ecotourism Project, and its Population Program.

On the tour we had the opportunity to see two sides of conservation in action. We met with a number of field

researchers and with the director of Mauritius' captive breeding and reintroduction projects. More uniquely we lived out the theory behind the role of ecotourism in conservation. Two of the most sought after of Madagascar's endemics are the Long-tailed Ground Roller and the Monias. As we were



Two of Madagascar's endemics: the long-tailed Ground Roller (top), and the Monias. Photographs/Barb Warren.

looking for these two species we happened upon a local man carrying an axe. Although most trees that were cut down are used for charcoal, the primary fuel in Madagascar and Africa, he was on that occasion looking for a tree that would make a good dugout canoe. He couldn't speak English, but our local guide talked to him and showed him pictures of the birds we wanted. He knew where there was a ground roller nest and where to find Monias. With his help and knowledge we were able not only to find but to watch both species at length.

A tiny reward by our standards was a substantial sum to him. He obviously had comprehended our joy at watching the birds and realized that somehow these were special compared to the other birds in the forest. We can only speculate how this experience might

affect his future activities in the forest and his relationship to other tourists, but it is very easy to believe that he won't be cutting trees near ground roller nests and he'll be anxious to help other birders. *He has benefited from the forest other than by cutting it down.*

Ecotourism isn't only about foreign exchange, cash flow generated by lodges, and jobs in parks—it's also about changing the lives of people who live near valuable natural areas—one life at a time. It was a privilege to have been involved with changing one life in Madagascar.

Barb Warren
Mt. Wolf, Pennsylvania

American Birds appreciates and encourages the comments of its readers. Please send your letter, along with your name and address to: *American Birds*, Letters to the Editor, 950 Third Ave., New York, NY 10022. Letters may be edited for clarity and space.

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