

## BOOK REVIEWS — RESEÑAS DE LIBROS — RESENHAS DE LIVROS

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**Manual del Observador de Aves.**—Tito Narosky & Andrés Bosso. 1995. Editorial Albatros SACI, Buenos Aires. 254 pp., numerous color and black and white illustrations, subject index. ISBN 950-24-0645-1. Soft cover.

To my knowledge, this unique and idiosyncratic book is the only one of its kind in the Neotropical region. Written by two outstanding Argentine ornithologists, the indefatigable Tito Narosky (co-author of a 1978 guide to the birds of Buenos Aires Province and of the well-known field guide to the birds of Argentina and Uruguay; see my reviews in *Ornitol. Neotrop.* 8: 214–215, 1997) and Andrés Bosso, of the Asociación Ornitológica del Plata, this volume takes readers along in a series of journeys through many ornithological topics, mostly Argentine in focus, but also beyond. The book is richly illustrated with color photographs, some of which are strikingly beautiful (by many photographers, including a number by Narosky himself), and with very attractive color plates and black-and-white drawings and cartoons signed by the talented Marcelo Bettinelli. The text is highly personal and discursive, even chatty. The authors address the reader in the familiar form “tú” instead of a more formal mode. Although it is clearly meant for beginners, this book nevertheless covers so much ground, and in such an interesting fashion, that I could not put it down after having begun to read it. As an introduction to Neotropical and Southern Cone ornithology in general, and of course to Argentine ornithology in particular, this nice book is highly recommended.—François Vuilleumier.

**Aves del Uruguay. Lista, Estatus y Distribución.**—Adrián B. Azpiroz. 1997. PROBI-DES (Programa de Conservación de la Biodiversidad y Desarrollo Sustentable en los Humedales del Este), Rocha, Uruguay. 52 pp., color photographs, maps, no index. ISBN 9974-7532-2-8. Soft cover booklet.

This is basically an annotated checklist of the birds of Uruguay (formally called República Oriental del Uruguay). An introduction describes the major features of the country and indicates the scope of the work. A brief chapter describes the Uruguayan avifauna within the Neotropical context; a section describes the major habitats found in Uruguay and what birds occur in each; another section gives indications about bird watching in Uruguay (equipment, as well as some especially interesting sites). Problems of conservation are presented in a couple of pages. In a final introductory section, the author describes the avifauna of the Bañados del Este wetlands. The bulk of the booklet (pages 21–38) contains an annotated list of the 396 species that are included in the list. Finally, distribution maps of most of the 396 species are presented on pp. 39–50. At the bottom of page 50 is given a list of the species (Spanish names only unfortunately) that have been recorded only once in Uruguay, and that are not mapped. Quite a few of the species are illustrated with color photographs, grouped in the center of the booklet. In the checklist, the status of each species is indicated by symbols that also specify habitat and relative abundance. Names include the Spanish names used in Uruguay, Latin names, and English names. Together with a field guide like Narosky and Yzurieta's “Guía para la

Identificación de las Aves de Argentina y Uruguay” (various editions), and with the manual by Gore and Gepp (“Las Aves del Uruguay”, 1978; unfortunately out of print, and only rarely found in second-hand bookstores in Montevideo), this booklet will be extremely useful in the field and will nicely complement the earlier Uruguayan checklists, such as Cuello and Gerzenstein's scholarly “Las Aves del Uruguay” (1962) and Cuello's “Lista de Referencia y Bibliografía de las Aves Uruguayas” (1985). This attractive publication, a welcome addition to the literature on Uruguayan birds, can be obtained from Adrián Azpiroz & PROBIDES, Ruta 9, km 204, Rocha, Uruguay.—François Vuilleumier.

**Key Areas for Threatened Birds in the Neotropics.**—David C. Wege & Adrian J. Long. 1995. BirdLife International (distributed in the Americas by Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, DC), Cambridge, UK. Foreword by Enrique H. Bucher. 311 pp., numerous maps, numerous line drawings of birds by Jon Fjeldså, 5 appendices, index of key areas. ISBN 1 56098 529 1. Soft cover.

Apparently the goal of this ambitious book, which is number 5 in the BirdLife Conservation Series, is to identify areas in the Neotropics that represent regions where threatened species occur, and that, consequently, need conservation attention. The entire concept of this book, and its ultimate value, rests with its focus on “threatened species” and on its definition of “key areas.” Threatened species are the species identified as such by Collar *et al.* in their book, “Threatened Birds of the Americas” (1992). The present work treats 290 threatened species (8% of the total avifauna) occurring from México to Argentina and Chile. As stated by the authors (p. 11), in order “to ensure that wherever possible each threatened species is adequately represented within Key Areas”...“a

simple set of criteria was devised (Box 1), such that wherever *possible the three most important areas from which a threatened bird is known were selected as Key Areas*” (authors' italics). Although reasonable, the criteria (too many to be given in such a brief review; see them listed in Box 1, page 11) do not appear, to me at least, to be as simple as the authors claim. The bulk of the book consists of the National Inventories of key areas (pages 28–289). For each country, discussed in alphabetical order, the threatened birds are listed and the key areas they occupy are given in table form, maps of endemic bird areas are presented, and a table shows the top key areas. The text presents a variety of information on key area protection, changes to the threatened list, old records, the outlook, and a bibliographic list of data sources. For each country the sites identified as key areas are then described and mapped, and the threatened species in each are listed and their recent status examined. The length of the country accounts vary, from a few pages for the Guianas (pooled, 5 pages), Uruguay (5 pages), or Chile (9 pages) to many more pages for Colombia (29 pages), Perú (33 pages), or Brazil (57 pages). Five appendices list the key areas by species, the distribution of key areas within endemic bird areas, the 1994 list of threatened bird species of Central and South America, the new IUCN threat categories, and the criteria for important bird areas. In my opinion, this book is of interest chiefly in its identification of where 290 so-called threatened species occur in Central and South America and, in those sites, what their status is. This information is of interest from a conservation as well as a biogeographic perspective. I am not convinced, however, that the “key areas” as such are of any biogeographic significance. Had different criteria been used for a different set of “threatened” (or “rare”) species, presumably other so-called “key areas” would have been identified. Hence, the chief value of this attractively pro-

duced volume, which was clearly made possible by the extensive use of computer manipulated databases, may be in calling attention, country by country, to the status of a small set of rare species (here called threatened). If the exercise displayed in this book helps in protecting some species in some areas it will have served its purpose.—François Vuilleumier.

**Manual de Reconocimiento y Evaluación Ecológica de las Aves de Córdoba.**—

Darío Yzurieta. 1995. Gobierno de Córdoba, Ministerio de Agricultura, Ganadería y Recursos Renovables, Córdoba, Argentina. 396 pp., numerous color illustrations and distribution maps, glossary, index of scientific names, index of vernacular (Spanish) names. Soft cover.

The author of this book, the late Darío Yzurieta, was an unusually gifted field naturalist who had very extensive knowledge of Argentine birds, and is perhaps best known as the artist and co-author of the field guides to Argentine birds produced jointly with Tito Narosky, and of a manual to water birds of Córdoba Province, co-authored with Manuel Nores (which I reviewed in *Ornitol. Neotrop.* 8: 214–215, 1997). The present work is due to Yzurieta alone. Most of the color illustrations are apparently taken from the Argentine field guide co-authored with Narosky, who, in an affectionate preface, discussed some of Yzurieta's talents and endearing human qualities. Incidentally, these illustrations are far better reproduced in the present book than in any of the editions of the Argentine field guide that I own. After a brief introduction to the environments of Córdoba Province, especially its extraordinary wetlands (Laguna Mar Chiquita and Bañados del Río Dulce) and wonderful sierras (in Argentina called “ambientes serranos”), and a discussion of the major groups of birds (pp. I–XXVII), the

book describes 378 species of birds, each of them on a single page. The format is consistent throughout, and includes, besides a portrait of the species and a distribution map (both in color), very succinct entries about ecological status, identification, habitat, distribution and regional density, distribution outside Córdoba, relationships to human beings (for example, whether the species occurs in or near human structures, or whether humans are generally aware or unaware of that species), relative abundance, and ecological status. This book is excellent for its intended audience, such as amateur naturalists and, especially, game wardens and conservationists, and deserves a wide diffusion in Córdoba and central Argentina. Unfortunately, the publication of this book does not appear to be generally known, and it is only through the kindness of my colleague Pablo Luis Michelutti, Guardaparque at Miramar, that I became aware of its existence and was able to own a copy.—François Vuilleumier.

**Neotropical Birds. Ecology and Conservation.**—

Douglas F. Stotz, John W. Fitzpatrick, Theodore A. Parker III, & Debra K. Moskovits. 1996. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago. x + 478 pp., 16 color plates and 46 black and white plates of habitat types, 48 text-figures, 9 databases, general index, index of scientific names, plus three numbered maps on unpaginated pages at end of book. ISBN 0-226-77629-8 (cloth) and 0-226-77630-1 (paper).

This thick book, “A project of Conservation International and the Field Museum of Natural History,” was dedicated by its authors to the memory of Ted Parker and Alwyn Gentry, “cherished friends and ardent explorers who opened our eyes, changed our lives, and inspired a generation of conservation biologists.” Co-author Ted Parker, who died in 1993, clearly played a fundamental

role during the preparation of the book. In the other authors' own words, "Ted Parker's knowledge formed the core of the ecological database" (Preface, p. xvi) and "The largest single source of information for the databases was the personal, unpublished information of the late Theodore A. Parker III" (in Note to readers, p. xix). Indeed, the databases, which constitute Part 4 of the book, and make up more than half of it (pages 118–436), are the core of the book itself. The first three parts are: a description of avian communities (Part 1, pp. 11–61, richly illustrated with beautiful color and black and white plates), a discussion of bird migration and conservation in the Neotropics (pages 65–78), and a discussion of priorities for protection (pages 81–112). The authors state in their preface (p. xv) that "We undertook this project with two goals. First, we hoped to compile an enormous volume of new, largely unpublished information on the ecology of Neotropical birds. Much of the data now available on these four thousand bird species could not reach the literature through typical channels of technical publishing, so a synoptic reference tool seemed the right approach. Second, we had each spent much of our adult life witnessing firsthand the disappearance of some of the greatest living treasures on earth ... It seemed to us that bird communities provided a remarkably accurate barometer of habitat conditions. We saw both the need and the opportunity to organize knowledge about Neotropical avian ecology into a conservation framework." It is not easy to judge this book only by reading it. One needs to try and apply some of the conclusions reached by its authors to specific conditions in the Neotropics. This cannot be done given the scope of such a short review. However, on the basis of a limited study of this volume, I feel that the authors have indeed delivered what they promised. Insofar as this book is a monument to Ted Parker and, as such, includes much of Parker's

unpublished information about the habitat distribution and conservation status of Neotropical birds, the readers and users are fortunate to have this source of unique information in printed form. Three key components of the success of this endeavor are: (a) the classification of Neotropical vegetation types into 41 avian habitats (described in detail, with splendid illustrations of most, on pages 11–26, with a summation of them and numbers of avian species in each in Table 2.1): 15 forest habitats (F1-F15), 12 scrubs/grassland habitats (N1-N14), and 12 aquatic habitats (A1-A14); (b) the allocation of each Neotropical avian species into one or more of these habitats (database A: breeding species; database C: Neartic migrants); and (c) the classification of the Neotropical region into zoogeographic regions and subregions (maps 1–3, following the index). Without going into an exhaustive analysis, outside the scope of this review, I believe that the authors have succeeded in their goals. I am especially impressed by the fact that, whenever I checked on some of their allocations, in the case of birds and/or habitats and/or zoogeographic regions that I felt I know well, I found that I largely agree with their allocations, even though their ecological premises and mine are not the same. Therefore, the authors' identification of taxa and/or areas of importance in terms of conservation make sense to me biologically, ecologically, evolutionarily, and biogeographically (see, for example, their suggestions to preserve ecotones, gradients, and zoogeographic transitions, pp. 90–92). In fact, I find the approaches to conservation taken by Stotz and his co-authors, based on sound biology, to make infinitely better sense than other approaches, including the one involving the concept of "key areas" in the book by Wege and Long reviewed in this issue. I congratulate the authors and the publishers on a job well done.—François Vuilleumier.

**Las Aves de la Provincia de Buenos Aires: Distribución y Estatus.**— T. Narosky & A. G. Di Giacomo. 1993. Asociación Ornitológica del Plata, Vasquez Mazzini Editores, and L.O.L.A. (Literature of Latin America), Buenos Aires. 128 pp., numerous black and white distribution maps, bibliography, list of collaborators, gazetteer, index. ISBN 950-99063-6-0. Soft cover.

This excellent publication is an atlas of the distribution of 502 bird species found in Buenos Aires Province, Argentina. The two authors were helped by 61 collaborators, whose names and addresses appear on page 118. The distribution records are represented by black dots showing where each species has been recorded, either as a breeder, migrant, or wintering in one or more of the 128 political subdivisions of the Province, called Partidos. The relatively small size of each Partido, and, in addition, the fact that their surface areas do not vary very much, allows the reader to at once obtain a very precise idea of

where a given species occurs in Buenos Aires Province. The introduction clearly discusses the scope of the work, and describes the various categories of birds (residents, migrants, wintering, etc.) and their relative abundance. A second chapter describes the different vegetation zones found in the province, largely in accordance with Cabrera's widely accepted scheme of vegetation classification. For each species, next to the distribution map, a brief but very informative text allows the reader to obtain an idea of its status. Together with Narosky and Yzurieta's own field guide, this book is indispensable to any ornithologist working or visiting Buenos Aires Province. The authors and publishers must be commended on a very good piece of work. One can only hope that this book will stimulate the publication of similar atlases for other Argentine Provinces.—François Vuilleumier.