

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

Edited by François Vuilleumier

(To whom books for review should be sent)

**El Horizonte Infinito: Las Areas Naturales de la Estepa Patagónica Argentina.**—Claudio Bertonatti. 1997. Fundación Vida Silvestre Argentina, Buenos Aires. 72 pp., numerous color illustrations. No ISBN number. Soft cover. Obtainable from Fundación Vida Silvestre Argentina, Defensa 245, 6° “K”, (1065) Buenos Aires, Argentina.

This attractive brochure, published in Argentina by the very active conservation organization Fundación Vida Silvestre Argentina (and probably difficult to obtain outside Argentina, unfortunately), includes much information about Patagonia and especially its steppes, their geography, the history of its indigenous people and of its later colonists, its fauna and vegetation, as well as a sober accounting of the region's future given modern-day pressures from our “civilized” world. Even though there are no fewer than 21 protected areas in Argentine Patagonia, including six National Parks, the total acreage under such protection, at about 4 million hectares, is pitifully small when compared with Patagonia's huge area of more than one million square kilometers. Of the total land surface that is protected, however, only about 2 million hectares preserve the steppes, Patagonia's core biome. The largest such protected area of Patagonian steppe, the Reserva Provincial Meseta de Somuncurá, in Río Negro Province, a respectable 1,600,000 hectares, merits its protected status still only largely because of its relative inaccessibility. Let us hope it

remains this way for a long time. The sensitive, often poetic, text by Claudio Bertonatti, evokes the ruggedness as well as the grandeur of Patagonia's steppes. May this booklet be widely read by travelers, whether ornithologists or not, who plan to visit this magic region.—François Vuilleumier.

**Cátalo de los Vertebrados de la Región de Magallanes y Antártica Chilena.**—Claudio Venegas & Walter Sielfeld. 1998. Ediciones de la Universidad de Magallanes, Punta Arenas, Chile. 122 pp., one map. ISBN 956-7189-06-4. Soft cover.

The goal of this small book is to provide researchers with a complete and up-to-date list of all vertebrates occurring in Magallanes, the southernmost province of Chile, which includes the mainland of southern Chile and its myriad islands, from the largest, Isla Grande de Tierra del Fuego (Chilean western part only), down to the smallest specks of land emerging out of the sea all along the convoluted coasts of this remote and magnificent region. For each species of Agnatha, Gnathostomata, Amphibia (southernmost Chile has seven species of toads and frogs), Reptilia (one turtle and six species of lizards), Aves (213 species), and Mammalia, this listing gives Latin, (Chilean) Spanish, and English names, and a concise but excellent description of the distributional range and status. A 24-page bibliography completes this very useful tool, compiled by two well-known specialists of

this area and its fauna, and which I recommend to all workers interested in the birds and other vertebrates of southern Chile.—François Vuilleumier.

**Las Aves de Larrañaga.**—Rodolfo Escalante. 1998. Printed by El Toboso S.R.L., Gabriel Pereira 3245, Montevideo, Uruguay. 67 pp. No ISBN number. Soft cover. Obtainable from the author, Guayaquí 3425 Ap. 301, 11300 Montevideo, Uruguay.

In our era of modern and somewhat frantic ornithology, with fast travel and a nearly obsessive publication schedule, it is refreshing to see such a book, which recounts the work and accomplishments of a now somewhat forgotten naturalist, from a time when life was much slower. But slower time does not mean any less hard work and important accomplishments. Dámaso Antonio Larrañaga (1798–1825) was a priest as well as a naturalist, not a rare combination of vocations in his days. In eight crisp chapters, Roberto Escalante, the dean of Uruguayan ornithologists, places the work of Larrañaga in the context of that fascinating time and of the land that was, first, the Banda Oriental, then the Provincia de Montevideo, before becoming the Provincia Cisplatina and, eventually, the República Oriental del Uruguay. For anyone interested in the history of natural history exploration and ideas, and of ornithology in the Neotropics in particular, this small book is a delight. Larrañaga, an autodidact, was fluent, besides his native tongue (Spanish), in Portuguese (his mother's language), Latin, English, and French; he was also a good colorist. In addition to describing Larrañaga's career, Escalante also offers digressions into the life and work of other naturalists who were his contemporaries and, one would say today, his colleagues, including well-known figures like Félix de Azara or Amadeo Bonpland, as well as lesser-known ones such as John Mawe, Luis de Freycinet, or

Federico Sellow. The book ends with a list of the 124 species of birds that Larrañaga discussed in his writings (several thick volumes, all republished in Montevideo between 1922 and 1930) and a general bibliography.—François Vuilleumier.

**Viajes de Emilio Budín: La Expedición al Chaco, 1906–1907.**—Rubén M. Barquez. 1997. Mastozoología Neotropical, Publicaciones Especiales, No. 1: 1-82. Two maps, eleven black and white illustrations. ISSN 0329-1006. Soft cover. Available from Mónica Díaz, Facultad de Ciencias Naturales, Miguel Lillo 205, Tucumán (4000), Argentina; *Email*: upidba@pidba.satlink.net.

Another publication dealing with historical antecedents in the southern Neotropics, this booklet describes one expedition to the Argentine Chaco in 1906–1907, carried out by Emilio Budín (1877–1935), an Argentine naturalist who was born in Geneva, Switzerland, in 1877, and who was only a few months old when his parents moved to Argentina. Although Budín was primarily a mammalogist, and this monograph, which constitutes No. 1 in a series called Special Publications in the journal Mastozoología Neotropical, is published by SAREM, the Sociedad Argentina para el Estudio de los Mamíferos, its contents should interest ornithologists as well because Budín's itineraries, geographical and intellectual, crossover with those of ornithologists in Argentina. In addition, Budín himself published several papers dealing with Argentine birds in *El Hornero* between 1918 and 1932. And readers of this journal will recall that the person who can be called the father of modern ornithology in Argentina, Cläes Christian Olrog, was as much a mammalogist as he was an ornithologist. Among other interesting points brought out in this booklet, one can cite the profound differences in the style and speed of travel in the Chaco between the early years of the previous

century and the year 2000, and the relationships between Budín, in Argentina, and the well-known mammalogist Oldfield Thomas, in England (including the fascinating detail that Thomas wrote to Budín in Spanish!). I recommend that this work by Barquez on Budín's work in Argentina be read together with Escalante's monograph on Larrañaga and his labors in Uruguay: they make a complementary and fascinating duo.—François Vuilleumier.

**La Avifauna de la Isla de los Estados, Islas de Año Nuevo y Mar Circundante (Tierra del Fuego, Argentina).**—Juan Carlos Chebez & Claudio C. Bertonatti. 1994. L.O.L.A. (Literature of Latin America), Monografía Especial No. 1: 1–63. Buenos Aires, Argentina. Two maps. ISSN 0328-1620. Soft cover. Obtainable from L.O.L.A., Viamonte 976, 2° Piso Dto. D., (1053) Buenos Aires, Argentina.

This monograph is an annotated checklist of the birds found on Staten Island and Islas del Año Nuevo in the Tierra del Fuego Archipelago of extreme southern South America. The work is based chiefly on field work carried out there by the senior author in August–November 1981 and in January–February 1982, when a total of 43 species were recorded and studied. These personal observations form the core of the publication, but they have been supplemented by records from the literature. The entries vary somewhat from species to species, but usually include data on historical records, habitat, behavior, migratory versus resident status, and relative abundance. An additional 54 species, which have been reported by others from these islands, are also listed. This monograph makes a useful complement to the classic work by Humphrey, Bridge, Reynolds, and Peterson (1970) on the birds of Isla Grande of Tierra del Fuego.—François Vuilleumier.

**Fauna Misionera: Catálogo Sistemático y Zoogeográfico de los Vertebrados de la Provincia de Misiones (Argentina).**—Juan Carlos Chebez. 1996. L.O.L.A. (Literature of Latin America), Monografía No. 5: 1–320. Buenos Aires, Argentina. Two maps, numerous text-figures. ISSN 0328-1620, ISBN 950-9725-20-X. Soft cover. Obtainable from L.O.L.A., Viamonte 976, 2°Piso Dto. D., (1053) Buenos Aires, Argentina.

This book, which in 1997 won the First Prize of the Fundación El Libro for the “Libro de Ecología, Medio Ambiente y Derecho Ambiental” in Argentina, demonstrates that conservation in Argentina is moving in the right direction. Juan Carlos Chebez, the author of this thick tome, has been in the forefront of this movement. An accomplished naturalist who spends much time in the field, he is also a lecturer and a writer of popular articles and an administrator within Argentina's National Park system. As he himself wrote in the Introduction, “Pongamos pronto manos a la obra, porque mientras tanto las topadoras, el fuego y las motosierras trabajan sin descansar.” Chebez does put his money where his mouth is, as shown by this annotated and illustrated catalog of the vertebrate species that are found in Misiones Province, a roughly rectangular area wedged between Paraguay to the northwest and Brazilian territory to the southeast. Sadly, this beautiful area is threatened by the greed of multinational companies that are hellbent on exploiting (and thereby destroying) its forest riches. A few figures will suffice. Originally 87% of Misiones was covered by forests. In 1974 the forested area covered only 42% of the province and three years later, in 1977, was down to 40%. At this rate, nearly complete destruction of the remaining forest cover and of its associated biodiversity would occur by about the year 2025. That this possibility is not far fetched can be verified by anyone traveling on the red dust roads of the

region, where many huge trucks speed to carry the immense logs out of the area. The authorities will retort that “reforestation” programs are under way. The truth of the matter, however, is that “replanted” trees are exotic pines, *Pinus elliotti* and *Pinus taeda*, under which the biodiversity of a rich subtropical community does not belong and does not establish itself. The text of the various chapters is presented on double pages with English on the left and Spanish on the right, thus permitting the book to reach a wide audience. The species accounts, on the whole very brief, nevertheless give a good idea of where each species occurs. A useful feature in a book meant as a tool for conservationists is the inclusion of several vernacular names for each species, especially in Guaraní, the native language of the area, and in Portuguese, spoken across the near-by boundary in Brazil. With such a wealth of information between its covers, I have no doubt that Chebez's book will accomplish its goals, which are to offer a baseline to the biodiversity of vertebrates in Misiones and to help promote an even stronger spirit of conservation locally, nationally, and internationally.—François Vuilleumier.

**Las Aves de los Parques Nacionales de la Argentina.**—Juan Carlos Chebez, Nicolás Rey, Marcos Barbaskas, & Alejandro G. Di Giacomo. 1998 (1999). L.O.L.A. (Literature of Latin America), Monografía No. 12: 1–127. Buenos Aires, Argentina. Two maps, numerous text-figures. ISSN 0328-1620. Soft cover. Obtainable from L.O.L.A., Viamonte 976, 2°Piso Dto. D., (1053) Buenos Aires, Argen-

tina.

One more book of which the indefatigable Juan Carlos Chebez is author or senior author! The present volume is a well crafted and useful description of the 27 National Parks that now exist in Argentina, ranging in size from the huge, 758,000 hectares Nahuel Huapi complex in northern Patagonia, to the tiny 7 ha unit near Resistencia. Map 1 shows the localization of these parks. Whereas the Republic of Argentina should be justly proud to have created a great park network between 1934 (Nahuel Huapi complex and Iguazú Park) and 1991–1992 (Las Quijadas and Pre-Delta), a look at this map shows that the gaps in biotic representation remain large. Thus, there is no National Park in the Pampas, only very few and small ones in Patagonian Steppes, and only a few in either the Chaco or Monte Biomes. By listing all bird species that occur in the existing National Parks of Argentina, Chebez and his co-authors have rendered an outstanding service to ornithologists and conservationists. We all know now what has been achieved, and we also can see what remains to be done. Chapter 5, Conclusiones, analyzes the raw data presented in the body of the book, offering much food for thought and even more food for action. I only wish that this chapter had been presented bilingually (Spanish and English on facing pages, as in the Fauna Misionera reviewed above), to make its impact even greater and reaching beyond Argentina. May I suggest to Chebez and his co-workers that they should consider expanding their Conclusiones chapter into a book.—François Vuilleumier.