

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

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(To whom books for review should be sent)

**Paul Barruel, Artiste et Naturaliste 1901-1982.**—Gérald W. Le Grand; revised and completed by Marcel S. Jacquat. 2001. Editions de la Girafe, Musée d'histoire naturelle, CH-2300 La Chaux-de-Fonds, Switzerland. 192 pp., numerous color plates, black-and-white illustrations. ISBN 2-88423-041-6. Paper. Available from Musée d'histoire naturelle, avenue Léopold-Robert 63, CH-2300 La Chaux-de-Fonds, Switzerland (E-mail: mhnc@ne.ch). Price: Swiss Francs 49 (about \$33.00). [De luxe edition, cloth, numbered (500), Swiss Francs 59 (about \$40.00)].

Paul Barruel, a Frenchman whose first career was as an engineer for the Paris subway system from 1924 until his retirement in 1941 at age 40, was actually one of the best-known European bird and mammal artists of the 20th Century. Although many ornithologists or mammalogists in the Western Hemisphere might have trouble remembering his name, because of the dominance of other artists on this side of the Atlantic, his production was enormous and resulted in an extraordinary number of fine illustrations (color plates, line drawings) in many books, papers, pamphlets, and other publications on birds and mammals, not only European, but, indeed, worldwide, and especially Neotropical.

Many ornithologists of an earlier generation will know Barruel's work from his own book on avian biology, "Vie et Moeurs des Oiseaux" (1953; with 10 drawings and 16 color plates), which was translated the same year in Swedish, in 1954 in German and

English (as "Birds of the World, Their Life and Habits," translated by Phyllis Barclay-Smith, and published by Harrap, London and Oxford University Press, New York; reprinted 1973), and in 1956 in Dutch and Italian. Old World ornithologists are familiar with Barruel's work because of his numerous illustrations in Paul Géroutet's series of textbooks on the birds of Europe published between 1940 and 2000; Georges Olivier's "Monographie des Pie-grièches du Genre *Lanius*" (1944; 9 color plates); Sàlim Ali's "The Birds of Sikkim" (1962; 6 color plates); Robert-Daniel Etchécopar and François Hüe's book "Les Oiseaux du Nord de l'Afrique, de la Mer Rouge aux Canaries" (1964; translated into English in 1967); Sàlim Ali and S. Dillon Ripley's 10-volume "Handbook of the Birds of India and Pakistan ..." and the same authors's "Handbook of the Birds of India and Pakistan" (condensed version, 1983); François Hüe and Robert-Daniel Etchécopar's "Les Oiseaux du Proche et du Moyen-Orient, de la Méditerranée aux Contreforts de l'Himalaya" (1970); Stanley Cramp and K. E. L. Simmons's "Handbook of the Birds of Europe, the Middle East and North Africa: The Birds of the Western Palearctic" volume I (1977; 11 plates); and Etchécopar and Hüe's "Les Oiseaux de la Chine, de Mongolie et de Corée," volume I (1978; all line drawings and 8 plates, 6 in color).

Mammalogists will be familiar with Barruel's work in François Bourlière's "Vie et Moeurs des Mammifères" (1951, translated

into English in 1954 as “The Natural History of Mammals”) and especially the wonderful plates in F. H. van den Brink’s field guide to the mammals of Europe, originally published in Dutch in 1955, and later translated into Swedish, German, French, English, Danish, Finnish, Italian, and Spanish.

This very incomplete listing of Paul Barruel’s accomplishments as a wildlife artist cannot even begin to do justice to the man or to the body of his artistic work. I felt, nevertheless, that even an incomplete list was necessary in this review. Paul Barruel was a very shy and retiring man who worked essentially alone, and, from 1947 onward until 1977, five years before his death, lived with his wife Sara in a house in the small village of Saint-Jeand’Arvey, above the city of Chambéry. Other than those for whom he painted plates, and with whom he corresponded actively, those who commissioned works for their private collections, and a few faithful friends, Barruel avoided publicity and worked daily, meticulously, a perfectionist, at his studio in his house, believing that his art would speak for itself. His wife Sara was a constant companion and fellow naturalist, and their profound attachment to each other is evident throughout the book.

One must remember that Paul Barruel started working full-time as an artist only after his retirement from the Parisian public transport system (Régie Autonome des Transports Parisiens, RATP) in 1941, when he was already 40 years old. He had had no formal schooling as an artist, although his passion for natural history and his artistic talents were manifested much earlier on. Fortunately for us, Barruel came in contact with several influential ornithologists at the Muséum national d’histoire naturelle in Paris, including Jacques Berlioz, Christian Jouanin, and Robert-Daniel Etchécopar. These people, especially perhaps Jacques Berlioz, who was a water colorist himself, encouraged Barruel and helped him

develop his true career, that of an artist and illustrator of wildlife, especially birds and mammals.

The book under review here owes its origin to Marcel Jacquat, Curator of the Musée d’histoire naturelle of La-Chaux-de-Fonds in Switzerland. Under Jacquat’s direction the Musée acquired quite a collection of Barruel’s works. From there was born the idea of an exhibit about the man, his trajectory, and his art, organized around a number of Barruel’s original works. Opening first in Grenoble, France, the exhibit then moved to La-Chaux-de-Fonds, Switzerland. Le Grand’s volume, revised and completed by Jacquat, with the help of Suzanne and Jean-Claude Badin and Christian and Nicole Jouanin, describes Paul Barruel’s life, and analyzes his work. Richly illustrated with many photographs, sketches from Barruel’s notebooks, line drawings, color reproductions of plates from various publications on birds and mammals that Barruel illustrated, and many other drawings, color paintings, and other works in private collections, this book describes the life of a unique personality, a man of great integrity and uncompromising honesty.

To many readers, especially those who were brought up with Roger Tory Peterson as the master illustrator and field guide writer, the chapter entitled “Peterson, Géroutet, Barruel ...” will be a surprise. In it they will learn that in the 1940’s Paul Barruel started to prepare his own field guide to the birds of Europe. Based largely on field notes and sketches acquired during excursions, and completed by studies carried out on the skin collection of the National Museum in Paris, Barruel published his “Les Oiseaux dans la Nature” in 1949. Both text and plates were his. The text is a marvel of concision; the plates show the birds in simplified attitudes and stylistic renderings, and yet all the species are easily identifiable. This was my first field guide when I was a teen-age ornithological

beginner in Switzerland in the 1950s. In this undertaking Barruel had been helped by François Bourlière, the genial French naturalist, ecologist, conservationist, and gerontologist (see my obituary of him in *Auk* 111: 993-995, 1994), who enthusiastically encouraged him in this project. Barruel's field guide is a remarkable publication indeed. It contains 28 line drawings and 16 half-tone plates. Unfortunately, the printing and the reproduction of these plates was catastrophic, the paper was of poor quality and the font was poorly chosen. Not being a businessman, Paul Barruel could only lament these defects. "The lack of a true commercial strategy and eventual translations resulted in the book having a limited audience" (p. 65). (Interestingly, Barruel helped Peterson when he was preparing his own field guide to the birds of Europe, which was later translated into French by Paul G roudet.) It is possible that Barruel's bitterness after this missed opportunity made him choose the path of an illustrator of other authors' books, rather than the brilliant author cum illustrator that he had showed himself to be.

But no matter. After this disappointment, Barruel went on and painted tirelessly, and has left an extraordinary legacy of bird art, and, as much of it is published, it is here for all of us to enjoy. Ornithologists and artists working on Neotropical birds, should they not be acquainted with Barruel's art yet, must now consult and admire his work in such classic books as Robert Pinchon's "Faune des Antilles Franaises: Les Oiseaux" (1963; 6 color plates), Franois Haverschmidt's "Birds of Surinam" (1968; 40 color plates, 150 line drawings), and Helmut Sick's "Ornitologia Brasileira: Uma Introduao" (1984; 43 color plates, 120 numerous line drawings). Pages 121-125 describe how Barruel came to illustrate Haverschmidt's book. Barruel and Haverschmidt never met, and all their collaboration was done through correspon-

dence. Barruel's forty plates were finished before the text was written. It is after he admired these plates that Helmut Sick decided to ask Barruel to illustrate his own book on the birds of Brazil. Pages 142-145 describe the extraordinary collaboration, again all through correspondence, between Helmut Sick and Paul Barruel, when Sick was writing his magnum opus "Ornitologia Brasileira." Specimens that Barruel needed in order to paint the plates were sent to him at his home in Saint-Jean-d'Arvey on loan from museums in Paris, Munich, Frankfurt, Bonn, London, and New York. In order to help Barruel, Sick sent him his own sketches executed in the field. An example of the "translation" of Sick's field sketches and field notes into Barruel's own sketches and a finished pen and ink drawing is given on page 143, showing a *Lophornis* hummingbird and an *Allopnus* moth foraging side by side at a couple of composite flowers. The line drawing appears on page 327 of Sick's book (in the English translation by William Belton, "Birds in Brazil," Princeton University Press, 1993). It is a sad fact that because of miscellaneous problems and delays in the production of Sick's book, Barruel's original plates were of small size, whereas the eventual book is of much larger format. Thus the reproduction of these watercolors does not show their full brilliance. And although the plates were painted around 1968, Sick's book was only published in 1984, more than fifteen years later, and two years after the illustrator had died.

My congratulations go to Marcel Jacquat, the originator of this project and to G rard Le Grand, the author of this book, for permitting us to now learn more about the life and work of this reclusive but remarkable naturalist and artist, Paul Barruel, painter of Neotropical birds and of so much more.—Franois Vuilleumier.

