



West African Ornithological Society
Société d'Ornithologie de l'Ouest
Africain



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apparent error, one inevitably wonders about other records. I also doubt the value of one appendix, where population estimates for the country are given for a number of species (with no reasons given for the selection made). How can one reliably decide that there are at least 4 million pairs of *Andropadus virens* and 1 million *A. latirostris*?

The author readily quotes others' findings and there is a good, though not totally complete, bibliography, but the vast majority of the records are his own: an impressive performance. Anyone interested in the Upper Guinea forest avifauna should read this book. Several species reach their known western limit in Liberia, and this book will be a yardstick against which to judge new finds for many years to come.

Guide des Oiseaux de São Tomé et Príncipe. By P. Christy & W.V. Clarke, 1998. 144 pp., 32 col. plates, two maps. ECOFAC, São Tomé. Hardback, no price given.

This book is a proper field identification manual, far more useful for this purpose than the recent work of R. de Naurois (1994: reviewed *Malimbus* 18: 63–64). However, although more up to date than Naurois, it is far less well referenced as a source of information on the status of the birds of the islands. One of its major shortcomings is the complete lack of any references, and of any information on the source and reliability of new records; many “new” species, especially seabirds, are included but the evidence presented is not strong for many of them, or at least they are not properly documented (observers, descriptions, conditions *etc.*).

An introduction, with site descriptions, is included in Portuguese, English and French, and bird names are given in all three languages, but the rest of the book is in French. The reason for this choice of language is obvious, in that the main author is French and the ECOFAC project is dominated by francophones, but it seems a pity that it was not issued in either Portuguese (which would be much more useful for the local population and many tourists) or English (probably the most widely known language among potential users of the book from outside the islands).

Not all species included are illustrated (106 of 143), which is a pity, especially for such difficult groups as the petrels; one would need to take another book for reliable seabird identification. But the descriptions are quite good. The plates have a distinctive style that can be somewhat distracting, but they are quite accurate representations, not as stylized as usual in field guides. The colours in many are much too bright and the iridescence very poorly represented by bright single colours, especially in the pigeons, sunbirds and starlings. An additional minor gripe is that the order of species on a plate is often upside down with reference to the order of the accompanying texts. Strangely, in the texts, the notes referring to a group (*e.g.* storm

petrels) are included within the account for the first species of the group, which is a little confusing.

There are few comments on the general biogeography and evolution of the islands' birds, but the claim is made that *all* open-country species have been introduced to the islands by man and that there was no open habitat before the arrival of man. This point is still controversial, and can never really be substantiated.

These criticisms, however, should not seriously detract from the book's use by francophone birdwatchers, and it is indispensable as a field guide.

Alan Tye

Shrikes. A guide to the shrikes of the world. By N. Lefranc & T. Worfolk, 1997. 192 pp., 16 col. plates, numerous maps and line drawings. Pica Press, Mountfield. ISBN 1-873403-47-X, hardback, £25.

This is much more than a field guide, more like a monograph. In its almost 200 pages of small print, it deals with shrikes in only the most limited sense: the genera *Lanius*, *Corvinella* and *Eurocephalus*, a total of only 31 spp., with species accounts ranging from less than one (*L. marwitzii*) to nine pages (*L. excubitor*). This permits a full review of the biology of the group. The book begins with a balanced discussion of shrike systematics, followed by introductory sections for each genus, covering morphology, distribution, habitat, behaviour and population dynamics. This review contains a lot of detail for *Lanius*, but is completed in less than a page each for the other two genera, reflecting their size (two species each) and lack of knowledge of their biology. Just over a third of the species treated occur in West Africa: eight residents and another three in winter.

The author of the texts is French, but the English is mostly good, with only occasional oddities and ambiguities. One error is that the section on "Style and layout" (pp. 41–43) was obviously intended to come before the first chapter (p. 11). The book is a little temperate-zone biased; the generalizations, especially in the section on population dynamics, are largely based on temperate species and may not be justified for tropical species. For example, it is not recognized that the life span of Palearctic species might not reflect that of tropical species, and that mortality in tropical species can be extremely low after reaching adulthood. However, the lower breeding success of tropical species is noted.

The plates are beautiful and useful: perfect for identification (although nobody would actually buy this book for identification alone), nicely arranged, accurate and attractive, with many plumages and races shown. The distribution maps are very clearly done, with the maximum scale possible on each one, by avoiding the use of a few standard base maps (on which a bird's distribution might be a small part of the