



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



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some Upper Guinea or New Zealand species, are not included at all. In general it seems as though many species listed as NT should, according to the IUCN criteria, be listed as VU. Birdlife may have its own arguments for not strictly following the IUCN criteria, but if the latter are to be as far as possible comparable across taxonomic groups and different types of distribution, then the criteria should be followed to the letter by all evaluating authorities.

A short section near the end of the book lists some species as Least Concern (LC), although it is not clear how these were chosen. In theory, every non-threatened, non-NT species should be LC, unless it has not been evaluated (NE) or is listed as Data Deficient. In fact, it looks like many of the "LC" species should really be NT. The LC list as it stands suggests that all bird species not included in the book have not been evaluated, which is surely not the case. A simple species list of LC and/or NE species would have been better, instead of the brief descriptions for a few selected LC species.

Finally, a section at the end lists threatened and NT species by country, but disappointingly does not include the recently-extinct species. This would have been useful to show the progression of the process of extinction in different areas.

These criticisms do not in any way condemn the book. On the contrary, it is a timely and invaluable reference, and I hope that Birdlife will continue to find the money to permit regular revisions.

Alan Tye

The Birds of Angola, by W.R.J. Dean, 2000. 433 + x pp., colour habitat photos, a few maps. Checklist 18, British Ornithologists' Union, Tring. ISBN 0-907446-22-1, hardback, £50.

The latest BOU checklist takes up an honourable tradition: the avifauna of an African country that has been effectively closed to study for many years. The second Checklist, of Zanzibar and Pemba (1979, BOU, London), was based mainly on Pakenham's studies that he had carried out much earlier, since few ornithologists had visited the islands since independence. This Angola checklist is based almost entirely on collections, and observational data by the author and colleagues, up to the 1970s. Angola has since experienced almost continuous civil war, and most of the country is now a minefield. Even the study of collections is incomplete: those within Angola, including those of A.A. da Rosa Pinto, could not be studied, and one large collection in Lisbon was lost when the Bocage Museum caught fire in 1978.

The book therefore summarises older knowledge and is most useful as a synthesis and evaluation of already-published data. It will form an excellent resource for further study after the landmines have been cleared.

There are some stylistic and content differences from previous BOU checklists. There is no statement of global range for the species; a pity since this is always useful to place the country's records within context, and a 1–2 line statement for each of the 900-odd species included would have increased the size of the book by less than five pages. Many of the species given in square brackets are included based on their occurrence in neighbouring countries and therefore probable occurrence in Angola, in addition to the more usual BOU convention of using square brackets to indicate doubtful records from within the country. Each species has all collection localities listed with month of collection (the fact that this could even be considered indicates how sparse were the data for the work). This is useful for rare species, but common species have up to a page of localities, which should really have been summarized, thereby both saving space and facilitating interpretation.

The photographs are excellent, and give a superb impression of the country's range of habitats, but I found myself wondering how many of the areas depicted still look like they did in the 70s: possibly many, given the low population density in Angola and the prevalence of landmines. However, Dean points out that most large mammals and birds are probably now verging on extinction due to hunting and mines. The gazetteer is also first-class, with hundreds of minor place-names and collection localities listed, which are not to be found in large atlases.

Many birds of the Guinea rainforests (including several *Malimbus* spp.) reach their southern limit in the Cabinda enclave or the Uige and Cuanza Norte provinces of Angola, many E African species are found in the savannas of the east of the country, and many southern African desert specialists extend up the coast into the arid Namibe and Benguela provinces. Although it has relatively few endemic birds for its size, Angola is a fascinating country biogeographically, with a large avifauna, and this book will surely stimulate much interest in field work within the country when the security situation finally permits.

Alan Tye