



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



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"Roberts" has always been an invaluable mine of information, but Maclean's Edition is undoubtedly greatly improved all round; it will not only be a must for all ornithologists in Southern Africa but also has much to commend it to observers in West Africa. The illustrations alone make it very much worth while, since so many non-passerine species, and not a few passerines, occur in both areas; the coloured flight figures of predators and waders are especially useful, although the variable scale is confusing with, for example, Ringed Plover looking as large as Greenshank. Worth special mention are flight illustrations of Columbidae, most of which occur in West Africa, and a nightjar plate showing spread wings and tails of both sexes of the seven species (all of which also occur in West Africa). A few of the plates are rather overcrowded, and users outside Southern Africa would have preferred plates labelled with scientific rather than English names, since so many of the latter differ regionally. Placing most of the 'additional' species in the last two plates has made them into very mixed grills, with petrels and passerines figured together. Incidentally, the most recent 'additions' have a 'number' which is quite out of sequence with those of their near relatives; pipits run from 716 to 726 with two newcomers, Mountain and Red-throated Pipits numbered 901 and 903 respectively.

It would be quite inappropriate in a brief review to attempt to trace the changes in such a successful standard of work over its history of 45 years with 5 major Editions, and many amendments at most reprintings, but the reviewer has before him an original Austin Roberts (5th impression 1946) with 463 pages; a McLachlan & Liversidge, 3rd Edition (1st impression 1970) with 642 pages and the new Maclean 5th Edition of 1984 with 848 pages. They form a most interesting comparison, increasing size being but a measurable aspect of steady improvement in content and usefulness.

The Maclean 'Roberts' is a veritable compendium of information, apparently free from those blemishes that seem to occur in most modern works.

J. H. Elgood

CONSERVATION OF TROPICAL FOREST BIRDS, edited by A.W. Diamond and T.E. Lovejoy, 1985, Int. Council for Bird Preservation, Cambridge, UK. Pp xiv + 316. £18.50 incl. p. & p. ISBN 0 946888 05 1. Letterpress-printed, but otherwise having much the same format and feel as the larger Proceedings of the Fifth PAOC (see above) being illustrated with maps, graphs and tables, this valuable volume is a collection of papers presented at a workshop and symposium held at the 18th World Conference of the ICBP at Cambridge in August 1982. Although the illustrations are not always of very high standard, nearly all of the papers most certainly are. The 21 contributions are arranged in four parts: Global Perspectives, the Neotropics, the Paleotropics, and Workshop Proceedings. All of the papers are by internationally well-known ornithologists and, more importantly, there are few if any obvious omissions among the experts who have contributed. The five papers on African birds are by J.M. Thiollay (on West Africa), S.N. Stuart (East Africa), R.J. Dowsett (Central and Southern Africa), A.W. Diamond (threats and sites) and A. Prigogine (Albertine Rift forests - why this paper is in the Workshop part and not the Paleotropics part is not apparent). In addition A. Keast's and A.W. Diamond's papers in the Global Perspectives part refer extensively to the African picture.

Thiollay's reference list contains not a single *Malimbus* citation, which does not reflect too creditably on this journal. I should have liked him to give an even more detailed discussion of Threats (habitat destruction, logging,

cultivation, plantation, roads, pesticides, shooting, trade) perhaps at the expense of a 5½ page table which could have been compressed. But his devastating conclusions may be allowed to speak for themselves: "less than 3% of the original forest area (remain as primary forest) ... 77 island or montane endemics are already vulnerable and will be endangered in the near future ... 13 species of lowland rainforest birds have now very small populations within restricted ranges ... the situation is very serious ... hunting must be drastically controlled ... conservation strategy has to focus on the preservation of the few remaining virgin patches".

C.H. Fry

THREATENED BIRDS OF AFRICA AND RELATED ISLANDS, The ICBP/IUCN Red Data Book, Part 1, 3rd ed. by N.J. Collar and S.N. Stuart with 12 colour plates by Norman Arlott, 1985, Int. Council for Bird Preservation, Cambridge, UK. Pp xxxiv + 761. £24.00. ISBN 2 88032 604 4. A scholarly, up-to-the-minute, invaluable compilation of biological facts pertaining to nearly 200 species (many of them Madagascan or insular and not strictly African). The text is terse and compressed, but easily readable and mercifully free of telegraphese, for each species with a brief summary followed by extended sections on Distribution, Population, Ecology, Threats, Conservation measures taken, Conservation measured proposed, Remarks, and References. A measure of the research which has gone into the preparation of this compendium is that many species each have in excess of 20 references, mainly to recent studies. If, in a hundred years' time, the handsome colour plates shall be the monument to what is, rather than to what was, this book shall have served its admirable purpose.

C.H. Fry

FIELD GUIDE TO THE BIRDS OF SOUTHERN AFRICA, by Ian Sinclair, 1984, Collins, London. Pp 361. £9.95. ISBN 0 00 219131 8. Photographs are a valuable aid to identification, although a field guide relying primarily of photos as this one does has distinct limitations. All illustrations are in colour, with one illustration per species; over 900 birds are shown, the large majority by good, clear photos well-printed with true colours. A few photos of scarce species are merely bad snaps, and some rare birds for which no photos are available are portrayed by paintings. Photos are arranged usually in sixes, on a plate opposite a page with thumb-nail southern-African distribution maps and a 5-10 line text for each species. The book composes a nice entrée for newcomers to Southern African, if not subsaharan, birds, and is also worth possessing by more experienced ornithologists since so many of the species are so rarely portrayed photographically.

C.H. Fry

SOUTH AFRICAN RED DATA BOOK - BIRDS, by R.K. Brooke, December 1984, South African National Scientific Programmes Report No. 97, csir, Pretoria. Pp vii + 213. No price given. ISBN 0 7988 3264 9. Paper, A4 format. Illustrated by point-plotted South African distribution maps only. About 1000 references.