



# Reviews

## INVENTAIRE DES OISEAUX DE FRANCE

By Philippe J. Dubois, Pierre le Maréchal, Georges Oliosio & Pierre Yésou. Nathan, Paris, 2000. 400 pages; numerous line-drawings, histograms, and distribution maps. ISBN 2-09-260674-3. Hardback, £68.00.

This large-format, copiously illustrated and well-produced book is wholly in French, but, of course, the scientific names are given for each species. Two useful introductory texts cover, respectively, the history of ornithology in France, by Roger Cruon, and the evolution and history of the French avifauna, by Jacques Blondel. The bulk of the volume consists of individual accounts of the 512 species on the French List up to 1999, nearly 400 of which are regular visitors. The four main authors are well

known in the French bird-watching community, and are largely responsible for the establishment of the magazine *Ornithos*.

The book summarises the ornithological data amassed in France since the publication of the previous detailed checklist, by Noël Mayaud in 1936, in the magazine *Alauda*. As such, it includes the results of two atlas surveys of breeding birds and one of wintering birds.

For each species, the text discusses systematics; general status and habitat; the annual cycle; breeding and wintering ranges; and population trends. The last topic is discussed in some depth wherever possible, giving details of the present breeding or wintering distribution, and whether numbers are declining, stable or increasing. Each account is accompanied by a colour illustration, sometimes by a histogram showing monthly or yearly occurrence, and, except for

extreme rarities, by up to three distribution maps. About two-thirds of a page is devoted to each species, and rarities get their fair share, reflecting their interest to birdwatchers. Well-studied species, e.g. Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni* or Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*, occupy a whole page or more.

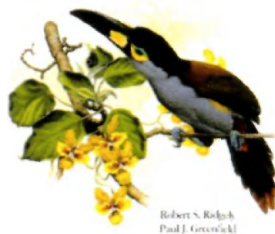
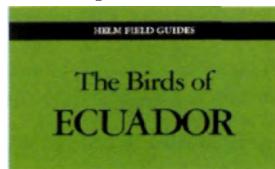
In such a monumental work, which is not cheap, but which is excellent value for money, a few blunders and omissions are inevitably found, but the total result is highly impressive. You will find a wealth of information here on a national avifauna which is still rich and varied. Appealing to birdwatchers of all persuasions, this book is essential if France is a potential holiday destination. The maps and histograms are self-explanatory, and the readable text provides an excellent opportunity to brush up your French!

*Norbert Lefranc*

## THE BIRDS OF ECUADOR

By Robert S. Ridgely & Paul J. Greenfield. Christopher Helm, A & C Black, London, 2001. Volume 1: Status, Distribution and Taxonomy; 848 pages. ISBN 0-7136-6116-X. Volume 2: A Field Guide; 748 pages, 96 colour plates and 1,596 maps. ISBN 0-7136-6117-8. Paperback, £80.00 for both volumes (or £40.00 for Vol. 1 and £55.00 for Vol. 2 when bought individually).

probably applaud and assume that this means that the plates are in one volume, for use in the field, while the text and maps are in the other, for reference. Sadly, this is not the case. Volume 2, the 'field guide', contains not only the plates but also distribution maps, identification texts, and sections on habits and voice for each species. This runs to



almost 1,000 pages, is more than 5 cm thick, and weighs in at more than 1.5 kg, which is hardly convenient. Volume 1, which is only slightly slimmer, contains lengthy introductory chapters and detailed accounts for each species, covering status, distribution, taxonomy, races and world range. So, after repeated requests over many years, from birders and authors alike, that publishers of field guides which cover large avifaunas produce these in two parts, so that we can have the plates separate and portable, we are still not getting there. This summer, in western Brazil, I have already seen the plates from one copy of volume 2 carefully sliced out and spiral-bound, and being used as a true 'field guide'. Publishers should get the message and do this for us.

Turning to the contents, most users will probably look at

The long, long wait is over! After more than a decade of hearing that a field guide to the birds of Ecuador was in preparation, it has finally been published. On learning that the work comes in two volumes, most people will

the plates first. Neotropical aficionados have perhaps been spoiled by Guy Tudor's superb plates in *The Birds of South America*, and may be a little disappointed initially (as I was) by Greenfield's paintings. Having used them as my main reference for a recent four-week trip to northern Peru (90% of the birds which we saw there are included in the Ecuador guide), I must, however, admit that I ended up full of admiration for them. Plumage details are portrayed accurately and they can be relied upon for identification purposes. They are well designed, with little wasted space, yet avoid looking cluttered, and many are aesthetically pleasing.

As might be expected from such experienced authors, the field-guide text is excellent. After measurements, and a brief statement on habitat and distribution, details are given of plumages and other identification characters. A section which draws comparison with the likely confusion species

follows. Common vocalisations are described under 'Voice', while the distribution maps are clearly reproduced and easy to use.

Volume 1 contains some very interesting introductory chapters, including 'Geography, Climate and Vegetation', 'Bird Migration in Ecuador', 'Ecuadorian Ornithology', 'Endemic Bird Areas', and 'Conservation'. The authors have not followed the 'new' Sibley & Monroe order, nor adopted the Phylogenetic Species Concept, but have been influenced by 'population-level differences' and have 'split' a number of species as a consequence. Birders who have visited Ecuador in the past can, therefore, expect some 'armchair ticks': for example, Tumbes Swift *Chaetura ocyptes* is now split from Short-tailed Swift *C. brachyura*, and Ecuadorian Trogon *Trogon mesurus* is split from Black-tailed Trogon *T. melanurus*. The bulk of this volume is taken up with the main accounts

for each species, which outline status and distribution in considerable detail, together with many references. Where relevant, there is a discussion of subspecies, taxonomic treatment, alternative English names, and, finally, a brief description of the world range. For obvious reasons, this volume will be of interest primarily to those studying the birds of Ecuador, though the taxonomic comments will be of relevance to those using the book in adjacent countries as well.

In summary, *The Birds of Ecuador* is not quite what I had expected, but it is undoubtedly a first-class and scholarly work that provides a wealth of detailed information not only about the birds to be seen in Ecuador, but also on more than half of the species found in the whole of South America. It will prove invaluable both in Ecuador and in adjacent countries, and can be thoroughly recommended.

David Fisher

#### AFRICAN BIRD SOUNDS

Vol. 1: North Africa and Atlantic Islands (Sahara, Maghreb, Madeira, Canary Islands and Cape-Verde). Vol. 2: West and Central Africa. By Claude Chappuis. Société d'Etudes Ornithologiques de France, in collaboration with the British Library National Sound Archive, Paris, 2001.

15 CDs. Vol. 1 £36.00, Vol. 2 £75.00; both volumes combined £98.00.

This remarkably comprehensive collection of bird sounds is divided into two companion volumes. The first comprises four CDs covering the vocalisations of 423 species from the Western Palearctic region of North Africa, including the Sahara, Maghreb (Morocco-Tunisia), the Canary Islands, Madeira and the Cape Verde

Islands. Volume 2 is a set of 11 CDs comprising a further 1,043 species from West and Central Africa.

Vocalisations of many Western Palearctic species are published here for the first time, including those of Barbary Falcon *Falco pelegrinoides*, Slender-billed Curlew *Numenius tenuirostris*, Trocaz Pigeon *Columba trocaz*, Laurel Pigeon *C. junoniae*, Raso Lark *Alauda razae*, Berthelot's Pipit *Anthus berthelotii*, Canary Islands Stonechat *Saxicola dacotiae*, Cape Verde Warbler *Acrocephalus brevipennis* and Blue Chaffinch *Fringilla teydea*. Volume 2 also includes the first published recordings for a great many Afrotropical species. For the sake of completeness, most vagrants to the region are included, with the result that three species of diver *Gavia* and four species of auk (Alcidae) are included, although they are

unlikely to be heard in North Africa. There are no announcements on the CDs, so that reference to the accompanying booklets is essential, and particular care must be taken over the track numbers, especially when there is more than one cut of a species on a particular track.

The booklet accompanying Volume 1 includes an introductory section in French and English, followed by the list of species and details of each recording, including the locality, circumstances and recordist (in French). The booklet accompanying Volume 2 is entirely in English, and also covers all the species from Volume 1. The introductory section is concise but thorough, and includes instructions on how to find each species on the CDs. This is best achieved by using the index, which gives each species an individual number. There is a thoughtful reminder that play-

back can be prejudicial to birds and that a cautious approach should be used, particularly with endangered species. Nomenclature and sequence are based on *The Birds of Africa* handbook. The species list goes into considerable detail for certain species or groups, including acoustic keys, notes on mimicry, discussions on regional variations etc. The text must be read carefully. For example, in the case of Richard's Pipit *A. novaeseelandiae*, there is a flight call of the subspecies *richardi* from Siberia, followed by a flight call

recorded in Malawi and a song flight recorded in Kenya. The African forms of Richard's Pipit are often regarded as a separate species, *A. cinnamomeus*.

This collection of recordings is a major update on the *Alauda* supplement sonore series of 11 vinyl discs, published between 1974 and 1981, which comprised 450 species. A number of errors in that series have been corrected, and a further 1,016 species have been added. The recordings are generally of excellent quality, the accompanying booklets are informative and

well produced, and the two volumes are packaged attractively. Claude Chappuis and his 136 collaborators are to be congratulated on such a monumental achievement. These sets are essential for anyone with an interest in African birds. They will be of immense help to fieldworkers, particularly in forest areas, as well as giving a fascinating insight into the diversity of bird sounds in the region.

Iain Robertson

THE COMPLETE GARDEN BIRD BOOK:  
HOW TO IDENTIFY AND ATTRACT  
BIRDS TO YOUR GARDEN

By Mark Golley & Stephen Moss.  
Illustrated by David Daly. 2nd edition.  
New Holland, London, 2001. 176 pages;  
colour illustrations.  
ISBN 1-84330-035-4.  
Paperback, £9.99.

THE GARDEN BIRD YEAR:  
A SEASONAL GUIDE TO ENJOYING  
THE BIRDS IN YOUR GARDEN

By Roy Beddard. Illustrations by David Daly;  
photographs by David Cottridge.  
New Holland, London, 2001. 128 pages; 100  
colour illustrations;  
100 photographs.  
ISBN 1-85974-655-1.  
Hardback, £14.99.

This is a re-issue of a beginner's guide to birds (see *Brit. Birds* 89: 326) for which attracting birds into the garden, and identifying them, are the central themes. Attractive, two-page identification spreads for 70 species that might be seen in a garden context allow illustrator David Daly the scope to show familiar birds in a variety of poses, anticipating behaviour that may be observed in the garden environment.

It is a shame that this second edition is not up to date. Garden Bird Survey figures from the early/mid 1990s are quoted; Spotted Flycatchers *Muscicapa striata* are still portrayed as reasonably likely to occur in an average garden; while the section on feeding could do more to guide the reader through the extensive commercial bird-garden catalogues now available.

The book does, however, succeed admirably as an accessible guide to identifying birds at home and nearby.



Another from the New Holland stable on garden birds, and the stunning photographs by David Cottridge, together with beautiful and accurate paintings by David Daly, ensure a pleasing browse. Some of the illustrations are familiar from *The Complete Garden Bird Book* (see left). A thoughtful layout produces a book that will, however, please both gardeners developing an interest in birds and birders wishing to attract more to their garden.

Almost half the book is comprised of the species accounts, 60 in all. Identification notes are very brief, but, by making clear the garden context for the species covered, and giving pointers to recent population trends, the text is accurate and enlightening for the beginner. For more experienced birdwatchers, the strength of the book is the season-by-season structure. This makes clear what the key aspects of garden improvement should be throughout the year, the emphasis being on feeding, providing water, encouraging breeding and deterring predators. Splendid overviews of the behaviour and movements of garden birds in different seasons ensure that a quick browse will also be an instructive one.

Tony Blake

