



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

Enquête Faunistique et Floristique dans la Forêt de Nyungwe, Rwanda. Ed. by R.J. Dowsett, 1990. 140 pp. Tauraco Research Report 3, Tauraco Press, Jupille-Liège. £7 (inc. p & p) from 194 rue de Bois de Breux, B-4020 Jupille-Liège, Belgium.

This is a collection of papers on various aspects of the biology of this important forest. Three chapters (including the one on the study area) and the annexe are in French, four (including the two on birds) in English. One of the bird chapters deals with the behavioural ecology, status and distribution of Nyungwe forest birds, the other with the zoogeography and systematics of forest birds of the Albertine Rift, of which Nyungwe is a part. Both pay special attention to the Albertine endemics and threatened species, and Chapter 3 contains a lot of new behavioural and ecological information about these species and others, including the call of what was probably the Itombwe Owl *Phodilus prigoginei*. Chapter 4 has a section on speciation in the *Apalis* warblers of the region. Other chapters deal with vegetation, mammals, butterflies, amphibians and reptiles, while the annexe examines Cyamudongo Forest, an outlier of Nyungwe.

Alan Tye

La Réserve de Konkouati: Congo. Le secteur sud-est. By P. Heeketsweiler & J. Mokoko-Ikonga, 1991. 323pp. IUCN, Gland. ISBN 2-8317-0080-9.

La Réserve de Konkouati: Congo. Le secteur sud-ouest. By C. Doumenge, 1992. 231 pp. IUCN, Gland. ISBN 2-8317-0095-7.

Paperbacks £12.50 each from IUCN, 219c Huntingdon Road, Cambridge, UK.

Both of these reports are based on impact studies carried out for petroleum companies, BP in the south-east sector and Chevron in the south-west. The Konkouati Reserve is situated in south-western Congo, adjacent to Gabon. Like other faunal reserves in Congo it is a reserve only on paper, being open to all forms of exploitation (logging, mining, bush-meat hunting *etc.*). It encompasses a great variety of habitats: mangrove, lagoons and marshes, a mosaic of forest patches and grassland savannas, seasonally flooded forest and tall dry-land forest (extending inland into the great massif of the Mayombe). Its natural history is very poorly known, like that of most parts of the country.

Both reports follow the same format, with the main chapters covering the physical environment, biological inventories, human environment and exploitation of local resources, and impact of oil exploration. Neither BP nor Chevron found exploitable oil in the area so their impact will have been limited - except for BP's reprehensible

method of opening up its seismic transects through forest and savanna with a bulldozer, when this can be done with small teams on foot.

Hecketsweiler spent only 2½ months in the field (June to August 1990), in the middle of the dry season, and Doumenge a similar period in the dry season of 1991. With limited time and assistance, their contribution to the study of the biological resources is inevitably restricted. The chapters on floristic and faunistic inventories occupy only a few score pages, about a quarter of the main text. Both authors are botanists by training and most of the text on biological resources, as well as most of the appendices, are taken up with details of floristic transects and plant lists. Birds are covered by less than a page in the main text and a tentative, partial list in an appendix of just over 120 species, about a quarter of the potential (cf. Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 1991, *Tauraco Res. Rep.* 4: 189-239). It is regrettable that some birds were actually collected for identification, despite which several species listed are extremely unlikely and are certainly the result of misidentification (cf. Dowsett-Lemaire *et al.* 1993, *Malimbus* 15); this could have been avoided by submitting the relevant section (or specimens) to referees.

Overall, Doumenge's contribution is of a higher standard than Hecketsweiler & Mokoko-Ikonga's, and he pays more attention to the available literature. Like all parts of southern Congo, Konkouati has been subjected to intensive hunting pressure and the mammal fauna appears greatly depleted. More detailed surveys need to be carried out to redefine the status of all hunted species; unless the "reserve" receives some effective protection (at least in a core area), the future of its wildlife is very dim indeed.

F. Dowsett-Lemaire

Ornithology for Africa. By G.L. Maclean, 1990. xxiii + 270 pp, 16 col. plates, numerous line drawings. University of Natal Press, Pietermaritzburg. ISBN 0-86980-737-4 (hardback), 0-86980-771-4 (paperback). Paperback 55 Rand.

Although aimed at Africa, the Preface gives away a South African bias: "Our African sun stays north of the shadows at all times of year" - not for us in West and Equatorial Africa it doesn't. For us, the South African term "oversummering" for Palaearctic migrant visitors is as misleading as "overwintering" might be to a South African, and the claim that Africa's universities are southern hemisphere ones makes no sense. This bias might appear trivial were it not for the fact that most of the continent (and its universities) lies north of the equator.

Maclean's stated aim is to cater for two groups of readers: interested laymen and university undergraduates. I am not sure how well he succeeds. Maclean admits that some sections will be unnecessary for students, but these are easily bypassed. More seriously, many complex concepts and technical terms, which would probably baffle the layman, are introduced without explanation (e.g. disulphide bonds, gill pouches) and only some are included in the glossary. It would not have harmed to define all terms at