

extrêmement délicate: quelques critiques concernent cette partie de l'ouvrage. Pour un certain nombre d'espèces, deux photos d'un format un peu plus grand auraient été préférables à quatre ou cinq photos qui n'apportent pas grand renseignement pour l'identification, sont de mauvaise qualité ou ne semblent pas pertinentes. Une erreur de traduction peut être dommageable pour la reconnaissance du Petit Gravelot ("yellow eye ring" traduit en "œil jaune bien visible"). Enfin, les planches comparatives pour les laridés et sternidés ne sont pas très "conviviales". Ceci dit, à l'exception de ces quelques petites critiques, nous ne pouvons que féliciter les deux auteurs pour la réalisation de cet ouvrage, et remercier, outre la cinquantaine de photographes ayant fourni gratuitement des clichés souvent excellents, les divers financeurs allemands et néerlandais grâce à qui ce guide est disponible gracieusement auprès des ministères chargés de la faune sauvage, des ONGs environnementales, des universités, des bibliothèques nationales et autres institutions compétentes en Afrique. Indéniablement, ce guide sera très utile et ne pourra que favoriser la connaissance de ces millions d'oiseaux.

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The Lanner Falcon, by Giovanni LEONARDI (2015), 299 + xvi pp., 52 col. plates. Privately published, Catania. Paperback, available from the author, Via Stazzone 235, 95124 Catania, Italy, <areleo@yahoo.com>, €50.

This book supersedes the author's earlier work (Leonardi, G., Longo A. & Corpina, G. 1992. *Ecology and Behaviour of the Lanner Falcon*), which was also published privately. The new book is considerably more comprehensive, as well as up to date (references from 2015 included). It includes chapters on history, taxonomy, genetics, structure and function, distribution and populations, territory and breeding, diet and hunting, movements, threats and conservation, and related species. These chapters appear to represent a thorough review of the literature (but see below) and include much unpublished information, covering even tangentially relevant topics and references. However, they read rather like a simple reportage of others' observations, with very little critical appraisal; I would have welcomed more of the author's own views on the significance of all the information presented (in particular from the earlier anecdotal and often inaccurate reports), and more distillation and summary, including a clearer indication of what represents the current state of knowledge about the species.

Given that this is so evidently a labour of love on the author's part, one would like to give an unreservedly positive review. Unfortunately, the book suffers from a number of problems, most or all of which seem to stem from a lack of an editor, to check the facts and references and improve the structure and language. Throughout,

the text presents a rather disorganized sequence of subjects and ideas, with many *non sequiturs*, gaps in the argument, and repeated sections. The use of English is non-standard enough to make one frequently hesitate to grasp the exact meaning, while there are many mistakes in the quotes in other languages too; for example Arabic is in places written backwards (left to right) and sometimes does not at all correspond with the transliteration given in Roman script. Translations of quotes into English are rarely provided, but inconsistencies between repeated uses are obvious and frequent enough to make one wonder what is correct, even for languages one does not know. This casts doubt on the accuracy of the long list and discussion of names of the species in many languages. Typographic and other small errors abound, for example figures labelled “bottom” instead of top and “dorsal” where it should be ventral. Inaccuracies also extend to data, for example on p. 256, 15 out of 282 birds is described as “2.1%”. This inadequate proofing seriously affects the enjoyment of the book as well as its value as a reference.

On following up citations in a few areas of interest, I began to find more serious errors and misinterpretations. For example, on p. 124, the description of the status of the species over much of Africa appears to be based on a reference from 1884, with most recent distributional information from West Africa not there reviewed, and the range account for East Africa (p. 130) is largely based on an unpublished report rather than the many authoritative texts and atlases for this region, even though the relevant references are cited in other sections of the book. There are many muddled reports, for example (p. 129): “There was one sighting in 1971 in Menorca, as well as occasional sightings in winter, such as in 1957–1958, but these may be misidentified Saker falcons (Flint and Stewart 1992).” But Flint & Stewart were writing about Cyprus and mention no 1971 sighting. Similar confusions abound, while many interesting observations are not referenced at all. Finally, the book’s reference value is further reduced by the absence of an index. Given that some topics are discussed in several different places, it could prove hard to track down important information.

That said, this is such a wide-ranging and valuable collection of material that it is probably still worth buying by anyone seriously interested in this striking and essentially African bird, while a casual reader might be willing to skim through without overly worrying about its shortcomings. One can hope that the author will consider employing an editor for the production of a future edition.

Alan TYE