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Société d'Ornithologie de l'Ouest
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BIRDS OF LAPALALA WILDERNESS, WATERBURG, TRANSVAAL by I.H. Davidson, 1986, Southern Birds 13, pp 69, 18 figs, ISBN 0-620-10488-0. SA R6.00, from Box 650284, Benmore 2010, RSA.

This is the thirteenth issue of a series of checklists of birds in discrete areas of southern Africa. Lapalala Wilderness is a privately owned nature reserve in the Waterburg Mountains of North-West Transvaal, which is managed, among other aims, to provide environmental education of young people regardless of race, colour or creed. This issue of Southern Birds includes a detailed description of the area and lists 262 species of bird recorded during surveys made from 1983-1986.

H.Q.P. Crick

THE ENDEMIC BIRDS OF MADAGASCAR by T.J. Dee. International Council for Bird Preservation, Cambridge, UK 1986 p 173 including distribution maps; 150 x 210 mm, paper, justified typescript; price £8.00.

The singular avifauna of Madagascar - indeed, of the entire Malagasy region, including the Comoro islands - remains poorly studied and poorly appreciated. Considering the huge land mass involved, it may well be true to suggest that it is now the most inadequately-known bird fauna in the world. What is quite clear, however, is that many habitats in Madagascar with their contained bird species are much endangered. Although not a very wealthy fauna, there is an extraordinarily high degree of endemism, even up to family level, with diversified and spectacular forms of bird life, which, with its equally fascinating and endangered mammals, makes this one of the most important island faunas in the world. Madagascar is comparable with Sulawesi and, with archipelagos like the Galapagos, Hawaii, the Mascarenes and the Gulf of Guinea islands, it is a crucible of evolutionary diversification to which the highest conservation priorities must be afforded.

As the author reports in his Introduction, this book evolved from his assisting his ICBP colleagues, N.J. Collar and S.N. Stuart with the compilation of their distinguished and invaluable "The Threatened Birds of Africa and Related Islands" (1985). The present work, if of necessity much shorter, is as scholarly and as useful. It is based on a comprehensive literature search, and the bibliography of over 200 titles will be the essential starting point for further researches for very many years to come. There is also a long gazetteer of place names, some of which have been historically elusive (see Collar & Tattersall's paper in Bull. Br. Orn. Cl. 107, 1987, 55-59).

Of the 197 breeding bird species in Madagascar, 106 (53%) are endemic; a further 25 species are shared only with the Comoros, giving 66% endemism to the whole region. Accounts of the status, distribution and habitats of the 131 endemics occupy the bulk of the text, with a separate section mapping all known records of most of them. One of several appendices discusses legislation and conservation measures already taken and those proposed for the 26 threatened species.

If 'The Birds of Africa' team do indeed eventually produce a final volume on 'The Birds of Madagascar' (which is a possibility), Mr Dee's compilation will be their Bible. In the meantime his excellent book should stimulate the improvement of knowledge via ornithological tourism. It deserves to.

C. H. Fry