



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



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petrels) are included within the account for the first species of the group, which is a little confusing.

There are few comments on the general biogeography and evolution of the islands' birds, but the claim is made that *all* open-country species have been introduced to the islands by man and that there was no open habitat before the arrival of man. This point is still controversial, and can never really be substantiated.

These criticisms, however, should not seriously detract from the book's use by francophone birdwatchers, and it is indispensable as a field guide.

Alan Tye

Shrikes. A guide to the shrikes of the world. By N. Lefranc & T. Worfolk, 1997. 192 pp., 16 col. plates, numerous maps and line drawings. Pica Press, Mountfield. ISBN 1-873403-47-X, hardback, £25.

This is much more than a field guide, more like a monograph. In its almost 200 pages of small print, it deals with shrikes in only the most limited sense: the genera *Lanius*, *Corvinella* and *Eurocephalus*, a total of only 31 spp., with species accounts ranging from less than one (*L. marwitzii*) to nine pages (*L. excubitor*). This permits a full review of the biology of the group. The book begins with a balanced discussion of shrike systematics, followed by introductory sections for each genus, covering morphology, distribution, habitat, behaviour and population dynamics. This review contains a lot of detail for *Lanius*, but is completed in less than a page each for the other two genera, reflecting their size (two species each) and lack of knowledge of their biology. Just over a third of the species treated occur in West Africa: eight residents and another three in winter.

The author of the texts is French, but the English is mostly good, with only occasional oddities and ambiguities. One error is that the section on "Style and layout" (pp. 41–43) was obviously intended to come before the first chapter (p. 11). The book is a little temperate-zone biased; the generalizations, especially in the section on population dynamics, are largely based on temperate species and may not be justified for tropical species. For example, it is not recognized that the life span of Palearctic species might not reflect that of tropical species, and that mortality in tropical species can be extremely low after reaching adulthood. However, the lower breeding success of tropical species is noted.

The plates are beautiful and useful: perfect for identification (although nobody would actually buy this book for identification alone), nicely arranged, accurate and attractive, with many plumages and races shown. The distribution maps are very clearly done, with the maximum scale possible on each one, by avoiding the use of a few standard base maps (on which a bird's distribution might be a small part of the

total area shown) as is so common in bird books. The bibliography is not complete, but includes most of the key works.

In summary, this is one of the best guides to a bird taxonomic group to appear in recent years, and finds a clear niche as a semi-technical but readable monograph. It avoids being merely a not-very-useful field guide to a world-wide group of birds, which no-one would actually want for that purpose, as are so many similar books.

Alan Tye