



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



**Join the WAOS and support
the future availability of free
pdfs on this website.**

<http://malimbus.free.fr/member.htm>

If this link does not work, please copy it to your browser and try again.

If you want to print this pdf, we suggest you begin on the next page (2) to conserve paper.

**Devenez membre de la
SOOA et soutenez la
disponibilité future des pdfs
gratuits sur ce site.**

<http://malimbus.free.fr/adhesion.htm>

Si ce lien ne fonctionne pas, veuillez le copier pour votre navigateur et réessayer.

Si vous souhaitez imprimer ce pdf, nous vous suggérons de commencer par la page suivante
(2) pour économiser du papier.

not have done that with *Birds of Africa*. *C. dorsti* differs morphologically from *C. ruficeps* virtually only on the under tail-coverts and tail; should not the authors have insisted on a plate showing the underside of the species?

Lastly a local grumble: although *The Conservation of the Birds of Gola Forest, Sierra Leone* (Allport, G., Ausden, M., Hayman, P.V., Robertson, P. & Wood, P. 1989, ICBP, Cambridge) is mentioned in the bibliography, curiously little account of it has been taken. *Hyliota violacea*, *Muscicapa olivascens*, *M. epulata* and *Myioparus griseigularis* are all documented there (as I can corroborate myself) yet all are ignored here. These omissions could be important: ornithologists are unlikely to be able to visit eastern Sierra Leone in the foreseeable future and by then the Gola Forest may have ceased to exist.

The enormous value of this work is incontrovertible and, if I have mentioned certain weaknesses, this is because the better the book, the higher the standards by which it should be judged.

G.D. Field

Etude Initiale. La Réserve Naturelle Nationale de l'Air et du Ténééré (Niger). Ed. by F. Giazzi, 1996. 678 pp., 52 plates, numerous figures and tables. IUCN, Gland. ISBN 2-8317-0249-6. Paperback, £17.50.

This new, comprehensive study, of a recently-established (1988) reserve, comes nearly 50 years after a volume in the famous IFAN series (1950, Contribution à l'étude de l'Air. *Mém. Inst. fr. Afr. noire* 10), which covered much the same area but with a rather different emphasis. The IFAN studies had a more biological and anthropological focus, whereas this new work aims to study the effect of man on the environment and assist in the formulation of a management plan. The chapters of the present book include studies of rainfall, hydrology, aquifers, geomorphology, erosion processes, vegetation, animals, archaeology, human history, anthropology, human population, economic activities, tourism, and the institutional and legal bases for conservation.

The book contains a wealth of fascinating detail. The rainfall studies clarify the relatively wet period in the Sahel from 1920 to 1965, before and after which the climate was drier, at least up to 1990, which seems to be the cut-off date for most of the studies included in the volume. The research, as well as development of the reserve, was curtailed by political unrest shortly thereafter. The vegetation chapters (by Pierre Poilecot) include a thorough biogeographic analysis, discussing the various habitat types and vegetation zones with their characteristic species, endemics and geographic affinities. There is an excellent set of floristic appendices.

The faunal chapters, also by Poilecot, are less satisfying. Only birds and large mammals are included, in marked contrast to the typically comprehensive IFAN studies, from which this book claims lineage. It seems that most of the research carried out during the project was devoted to the large mammals, the Ostrich *Struthio camelus* and the Nubian Bustard *Neotis nuba*. Perhaps the most disappointing aspect of the whole volume is the lack of information on other animals, and the poor quality (or at least poor presentation) of the bird work. Appendix 54 of Chapter 4 presents a bird list by habitat, but with no indication of how the information was obtained, whether from previous publications or new survey work, and if the latter, by whom. The statistical presentation is not especially rigorous: the multiplicity of appendices on the Nubian Bustard and Ostrich include many (e.g. 55) that could have been better presented as a few numbers in one sentence of text; several others (e.g. 60–64 on Ostrich group size) show nothing significant and could be replaced by a simple statement that no significant variation was observed.

The book suffers throughout from poor cross-referencing. The appendices, which contain much valuable information, are not numbered consecutively as a whole but by chapter, which makes it not very straightforward to find the right one. The huge bibliography is confusingly split into two sections, with no indication of this at the beginning, so that one can gain the impression that many references have been mistakenly omitted. In fact some, including some of the most important, indeed are omitted: Magin 1990a and 1990b are represented in the bibliography only by one “Magin 1990”; Dragesco-Joffé 1993 is (perhaps) represented there, but by *two* references to “Dragesco” 1993 (no a or b); Newby 1990 (one of the most frequently-cited references in the bird chapters and throughout the book) is omitted entirely. The bibliography is also full of typographical errors; for instance various volumes of *The Birds of Africa* are listed as: “Urban E.K., Hylari Fry C., Stuart K. 1986”, “Brown H.L. ... 1982”, “Urban K.E. ...”.

These faults detract from what is otherwise an extremely useful work. If one accepts the change of focus from those wonderful earlier IFAN volumes (while perhaps lamenting it), then the studies included in the present volume seem to achieve their stated aim. At the relatively low price, the book is a bargain, but hopefully IUCN will improve editorial standards in similar publications in the future: essential if they are to achieve the same reputation as those old IFAN studies.

Alan Tye