



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



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first mention. Many unnecessary terms are used too: do we really need "epimeletic" behaviour, when "parental" will do?

The chapter on flight leaves some questions inadequately answered (*e.g.* the reason for the difference in wing shape between soarers and gliders) and some explanations will leave the novice struggling, *e.g.* the potentially illuminating illustration of wing aerodynamics relative to lifestyle using cisticolas is so abbreviated as to baffle a beginner. The chapter on food and feeding is mainly about feeding methods, with bills illustrated by colour plates; it is pitched about right for an introductory text. That on zoogeography is interesting to someone who knows the birds discussed but will not mean much to an African student who has no idea what a colinga looks like or does. Ecology is dealt with in a chapter on "Adaptations to environments"; this is fairly successful and interesting but is marred by hinting at details which are not explained. For example, in the account on salt glands, countercurrent flow and active ion transport are mentioned but not explained at all. This would leave both student and layman wondering what was meant. The migration and navigation chapter is good, illustrated by a surprising variety of migration patterns, all well-explained. Two wide-ranging chapters on breeding biology form the biggest topic section of the book.

The text is in some places attractively composed (*e.g.* the chapter on classification and origin digresses on feather structure and colour), but in other places dry. Some sections are up-to-date (there is one on DNA hybridization) and others rather dated (*e.g.* the behaviour chapter: no behavioural ecology here, and not much elsewhere in the book). Not enough is made of the prime role that bird studies have played in many areas of biological advance. I spotted few errors, most of which did not concern Africa, such as "trogons cannot adapt to savanna woodland", whereas some central American species inhabit what in West Africa would be termed Guinea Savanna.

As an ornithological text, it is not bad, but there are more interesting ways to learn about birds than in an ornithology course, *via* behaviour and ecology courses, biogeography courses *etc.*, all of which can use birds as examples. Such courses could use this book as a source. Unfortunately, most African universities and students cannot afford a great range of books and must stick to one or two for a course basis. In such a case, I would not recommend using this as one; but then, I would probably not recommend any "straight ornithology" book at all.

Alan Tye

Les Zones Humides au Niger et leur Importance pour les Oiseaux d'Eau. By W.C. Mullié, M. Salifou, J. Brouwer & A. Kounou, 1993. 48 pp. Département de Formation en Protection des Végétaux, Niamey. Available free from IUCN, Programme pour le Sahel, BP 10933, Niamey, Niger.

This A4 spiral-bound booklet, which is entirely in French (not even an English summary), reports ground censuses of waterbirds carried out over two-week periods

during two winters. The counts were part of the IWRB annual waterbird census and the results are presumably summarised in their annual reports (see reviews *Malimbus* 14: 32-33, 14: 68). Ten sites were visited in 1992 and 16 in 1993 (only 6 in both years) of which most had never been censused before; all were in SW Niger. Counts for several species and sites indicated their international importance by the criteria of the Ramsar Convention but several key sites were under threat of destruction or actually being destroyed, including a major Niger River floodplain area and the last *Borassus aethiopia* forest in Niger. The bulk of the report consists of species accounts and site descriptions, but also includes some climatic and hydrological data, notes on relevant conservation legislation in Niger and mammal observations from W National Park.

Alan Tye