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*THE BIRDS OF NIGERIA* by J. H. Elgood. Checklist No. 4, British Ornithologists' Union, London, January 1982, pp. 246. Price £14 (£10 to B.O.U. members).

In 1964 J. H. Elgood produced a provisional checklist of Nigerian birds (*Bull. Niger. Orn. Soc.* 1, 13-25) which later became the basis of two privately-circulated lists (Parker 1970 and Heigham 1975), each with its own species additions and omissions, and nomenclatural and taxonomic preferences. With the publication of *The Birds of Nigeria* ornithologists have at last a standardised reference list of Nigerian birds.

The previous lists were just that - lists. But this work offers far more: a comprehensive and invaluable summary of the Nigerian ornithological scene, past and present. The first 50 pages cover topography, climate and vegetation of Nigeria; migration (Palaearctic and intra-African); breeding seasons, population trends and conservation. I regard this section as one of the volume's highlights and it should prove indispensable to anyone wishing to know, in a nutshell, the relationship of the country's avifauna to its environment.

The species treated in the annotated systematic list include all those recorded up until the end of 1980, a total of 838. The author has followed White's (1960-1965) taxonomy, but one wishes that he had offered some opinions on certain taxonomic inconsistencies, such as the inclusion of the Black-faced Fire-finch in *Estrilda* rather than *Lagonosticta*. Each species receives up to ten lines of comment, indicating its relative abundance, general habitat preference, distribution, migratory behaviour and breeding status. With such a large number of species to deal with, errors and omissions are surprisingly few. One glaring omission, however, the the Grey-headed Gull *Larus cirrocephalus* which, oddly enough, is mentioned in the paragraph on the Black-headed Gull (p. 93). It is easy to find errors in distribution amongst species with which one is familiar, and one cannot fault the author if he has not been kept informed. All the same I would like to set the record straight on two species reported for Kagoro. In April 1977, John Elgood and I heard a bird in the forest there that was unfamiliar to me but sounded familiar to him; he believed it was a Red-cheeked Wattle-eye *Platysteira blissetti*. After many hours of netting, and finally watching it singing, it turned out to be an Olive Green Camaroptera *Camaroptera chloronota*. Likewise a call I assumed was of the Red-sided Broadbill *Smithornis rufolateralis* proved to be the territorial 'song' of the Spotted Honeyguide *Indicator maculatus*. The wattle-eye and broadbill are noted in *The Birds of Nigeria* to occur at Kagoro, and I accept full responsibility for those errors since I did not inform the author of my subsequent discoveries.

This book is a must for anyone interested in Nigerian ornithology, and all of us who have yet unpublished notes on Nigerian bird distribution and breeding records must surely be stimulated by it to get our observations into print.

It appears at a time when, because of intense human population pressure, the natural vegetation of Nigeria is undergoing disastrous and irreversible changes. How these changes will affect the avifauna is still open to question, but the future of many forest species is bleak. *The Birds of Nigeria* is not just an annotated checklist, but an historical document whose ornithological value must increase with every Nigerian tree felled.