

Short reviews

Birds of Prey of the Middle East. By Bertel Bruun and Assas Serhal. Illustrated by Arthur Singer and Sherif Baha. (Holy Land Conservation Fund & the Society for the Protection of Nature in Lebanon. New York & Beirut, 1988. 96 pages. \$10.00) This is a slim, handy-sized field guide to birds of prey, in Arabic. Non Arabic speakers could, however, make use of the very clear maps and excellent colour illustrations. I cannot review the text, but the calibre of the authors is such that I am sure that it is accurate and helpful. Hopefully, this is a fore-runner of other guides. [RICHARD PORTER]

Kennzeichen und Mauser europäischer Singvögel, 4. Teil. Cistensänger, Seidensänger, Schwirle, Rohrsänger. By Hans Bub and Harald Dorsch. (Die Neue Brehm-Bücherei 580. A. Ziemsen Verlag, Wittenberg Lutherstadt, 1988. 221 pages. DM24.90) Continuing the well-received series on the morphology and moult of

European song-birds (*Brit. Birds* 77: 637-638; 79: 315), this volume deals with the genera *Cisticola* (one species), *Cettia* (one), *Locustella* (six) and *Acrocephalus* (eight). Species accounts average 12 pages and cover plumage and biometrics, subspecific and geographical variation, sexing and ageing, breeding biology (briefly), and moult, all supported by an admirably comprehensive bibliography. Anyone with an interest in warblers, and a little understanding of German (or possessing a German/English dictionary), would find much of value in this volume. Where else would you find a photograph showing the ventral and dorsal surfaces of five species of *Locustella*?

[A. R. DEAN]

At the Water's Edge: the secret life of a lake and stream. By Stephen Dalton with Jill Bailey. (Century, London, 1989. 160 pages. £16.95) This magnificent book could have been entitled 'The Beauty of the English Countryside'. In fact, it shows, by Stephen Dalton's superlative colour photo-

continued ...

graphs, the habitats and wildlife of the Loder Valley Reserve in Sussex. Birds play a relatively minor part, but this is a volume to be treasured by everyone who loves the countryside. It would make a perfect present . . .

Operation Chough: the story of the Cornish Chough—will it ever return? Edited by Malcolm Ellis. (The Rare and Endangered Birds Breeding Centre, Hayle. 27 pages. £1.95) This colourful, well-illustrated booklet contains seven short articles outlining Operation Chough, the history of the Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax* in Cornwall and Britain and the relationships with other crows and choughs.

Aimed at producing popular support for the reintroduction of Choughs, it emphasises the need for scientifically based assessments of the likelihood of natural recolonisation and of whether the Cornish countryside today has the potential to support them. [ERIC BIGNAL]

Slovenski Prispevek K Evropskemu Ornitološkemu Atlasu. By Iztok Geister. (Iztok Geister, Ljubljana, 1989. 41 pages. Paperback. No price given) The results of atlas fieldwork during 1985-88 in the province of Slovenia in Yugoslavia, displayed in over 200 maps (six to a page). The standard categories (confirmed, probable and possible breeding) are shown by three sizes of dot for each of the nineteen 50 km × 50 km squares in Slovenia. The maps are labelled with the scientific names and there is a full English translation of the one-page explanatory introduction.

A Voice for the Mute Swan. By Gail A. Glaser. (Whittet Books, London, 1989. 125 pages. £10.95) Veterinary nurse Gail Glaser describes her experiences in treating injured Mute Swans *Cygnus olor*. An outline of the species' ecology precedes anecdotal case histories of swans in trouble from pollution, fishermen's lead and vandalism. Constantly attributing human qualities to birds, the book and its drawings and photographs will interest the general reader more than the ornithologist. Ms Glaser stresses the difficulties of helping injured swans (hopefully encouraging would-be swan rescuers to seek RSPCA help). A modest, unpretentious, slightly sentimental, appeal for swan protection. [RICHARD COLLINS]

Songbirds: how to attract them and identify their songs. By Chris Harbard. (Kingfisher Books, London, 1989. 160 pages. £14.95) The 'Songbirds' in this book and cassette are the European Oscines (i.e. the Passerines). Opening chapters deal well with bird song, identification, sound-recording and attracting birds to the garden. Full-page descriptions of 100 species follow. The illustrations are bold and clear, but not always accurate. The graphic representation of song patterns by simple lines above a phonetic description should prove helpful. The cassette has good recordings of all the species, but they have been poorly transferred and are spoilt by excessive hiss. The spoken introductions often sound banal. Species names alone would have sufficed. This is a useful and attractive publication for people who enjoy bird song, but it could have been much better. [RON KETTLE]

The Avocet. By David Hill. (Shire Publications, Aylesbury, 1989. 24 pages. Paperback £1.95) Another in this excellent Shire series, mixing fact-filled text with good photographs and instructive drawings.

The Ancient Solitary Reign. By Martin Hocke. (Grafton Books, London, 1989. 358 pages. Hardback £11.95, paperback £7.95.) Allegorical novel, sprinkled with (mostly) accurate owl biology. Barn Owl hero, 'Hunter', gains help of Tawny and Little Owls to defeat marauding Eagle Owl. Captured and caged in a zoo, Hunter escapes and prevents radical Barn Owls warring with Tawnies. Weak, unconvincing ending. [MAO]

Owls: in folklore and natural history. By Virginia C. Holmgren. (Capra Press, Santa Barbara, California, USA, 1988. 176 pages. Paperback \$8.95) This charming book looks at owls in folklore, comparing modern scientific knowledge with the view of folk tales from around the world. There are also brief accounts of North American owls, including identification and distribution. [MAO]

Great Birding Trips of the West. By Joan Easton Lentz. (Capra Press, Santa Barbara, 1989. 281 pages. Paperback \$10.95) Where to watch birds in Arizona, California, Colorado and Washington, with maps, travellers' tips and what you are likely to see, written in evocative, anecdotal style.

A Bird Atlas of Kenya. By **Adrian Lewis and Derek Pomeroy.** (A. A. Balkema, Rotterdam, 1989. 620 pages. £35.75) During 1970-84, over 200 observers contributed the records which form the basis of this atlas. Published records, museum skins and nest record cards were also used as sources, and the distribution maps plot the old (pre-1970) and recent (post-1969) records separately, with the earlier ones shown by three sizes of shaded square and the recent ones by the same three sizes of black squares, superimposed when necessary. The three sizes of square correspond to the standard international categories (*Auspicium* 5 (suppl.): 13-15). Thus, it is clear when earlier breeding evidence for a square is better than that obtained for the recent period (but the reverse cannot be determined from the maps). The grid used is '¼-square degrees', so that each square has the dimensions 0.5° by 0.5° , of which there are 228 squares and part-squares in Kenya. This book includes maps for 871 of the 1,065 species recorded in Kenya. The maps and texts make up 523 pages, with one to three maps per page, and brief but highly concentrated texts. This is a book for ornithologists rather than bird-lovers; it will clearly be highly regarded by everyone studying Kenyan birds, but one wonders whether a more 'glossy' and popular treatment might have acted as a catalyst for converting more Kenyans to take an interest in birds and birdwatching, and perhaps contribute to future surveys.

The Twitchers' Guide to British Birds. Illustrated by **Rodger McPhail**; text by **Robin Page.** (Bird's Farm Books, Barton, 1989. 48 pages. Paperback £1.95) Do you remember our 'Bird names explained'? Here



Spotted Crane

are 55 examples: cartoons illustrating English names of (mainly) British birds. If you are in the mood, you could get several chuckles, and perhaps even a guffaw or two.

Die Hohltaube. By **Reinhard Möckel.** (Die Neue Brehm-Bücherei 590. A. Ziemsen Verlag, Wittenberg Lutherstadt, 1988. 199 pages. Paperback DM21.60) This excellent, comprehensive and very fully illustrated monograph on the Stock Dove *Columba oenas* is a must for all who have any interest in this attractive pigeon. Those who cannot read German will find it worth buying for the pictures alone. All aspects of the bird are dealt with. I found the section on the Stock Dove's inter-relationships with other animals, man included, of absorbing interest.

[D. GOODWIN]

Goshawks: their status, requirements and management. **Forestry Commission Bulletin 81.** By **S. J. Petty.** (HMSO, London, 1989. 18 pages. Paperback £3.00) Aimed primarily at forest managers, and a useful addition to the range of Forestry Commission publications. There are short sections on description, status, food, habitat requirements, population density and productivity and protection. The main section concerns management of nesting areas, but, as the author's own studies have taken place in an upland forest, some of his guidelines are not entirely applicable to lowland areas. In the main, however, they will (if adhered to) greatly reduce the risk of accidental disturbance, which can be a significant cause of nest failure in managed forests (see *Brit. Birds* 82: 56-67).

[ANON]

Ospreys: a natural and unnatural history. By **Alan F. Poole.** (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989. 246 pages. £17.50) Alan Poole's new monograph on the Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* is excellent; not only is he one of the world's leading researchers on the species, but he has written a very readable book: his style is interesting and the text authoritative. Original ideas and research are ably presented, and a down-to-earth approach relates the bird to our present-day world. Most populations are now recovering from threats such as persecution and pesticides, but habitat loss and degradation is a problem. The Osprey is a survivor, however, and its tolerance of people will be the key to its future success. The book is

well laid out; and contains 55 relevant black-and-white photographs, many line-drawings, maps, diagrams and tables, a 12-page appendix and a very complete reference bibliography. All-in-all, a very good buy, and I recommend it wholeheartedly.

[ROY DENNIS]

The Great Crested Grebe. By **K. E. L. Simmons.** (Shire Publications, Aylesbury, 1989. 24 pages, Paperback £1.95) The Master's wisdom and 25 photographs (14 of them in colour) condensed into 24 pages, and a dozen sketches of 'everyday activities' by Robin Prytherch as a bonus. Fantastic value at the price.

The Sound of Nature: sylvan concert;
The Sound of Nature: spring concert.

Both by Walter Tilgner. CD SM9001-50; CD SM9003-50. (Natural Sound/Wergo, Mainz, West Germany, 1988. DM34.00 each) No field identification sets, these, but pure enjoyment of digitally recorded sound giving superbly realistic audio entertainment. The birds, insects, amphibians and mammals come and go, flit from perch to perch, call, sing or, as is often the case (these discs being particularly good for woodpeckers), tap and drum in a beautifully natural evocation of woodland life. There are fine sequences of individual birds and several background performers to test your identification powers. The lack of detailed notes sometimes makes it hard to know what is what, but that adds to the fun.

[ROB HUME]

Dr J. T. R. Sharrock, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ