

Book notices

Hunting for sustainability in tropical forests. ROBINSON, J.G. and BENNETT, E.L. (eds.) (2000) New York: Columbia University Press. 582 pages, \$29.50/ £19.00 (pb).

Twenty-five contributions to this important topic. It is concluded that hunting mortality in tropical forests is additive to natural mortality, mammal populations being reduced by 70–95%. The hunting of many species is not sustainable. Ecosystem processes, such as pollination and seed dispersal may be affected. The book concludes that “only if the fundamental issue of hunting becomes central to all planning for tropical forest areas will the forests and their wildlife be conserved, and will rural populations in many tropical areas be sustained into the next century”.

Birding in the American West. A handbook. ZIMMER, K.J. (2000) Ithaca: Cornell University Press. £18.95 (pb).

An unusual book. It begins with sections on how to develop bird-watching skills. There follows nearly 200 pages on ‘difficult identifications’, material that supposedly is not contained within field guides. These are however written descriptions and comparisons, with a few rather poorly reproduced black-and-white photographs and diagrams. Colour plates emphasizing these identification features would seem essential. Over 100 pages are devoted to finding western specialties. I found the description of localities too vague and the visitor intent on locating these species would be better served by state site guides.

Birds of Bolivia 2.0. MAYER, S. (2000) Bird Song International. Euro 55.00 (available from Wierengastraat 42, NL-9969 PD Westernieland, The Netherlands: e-mail info@birdsongs.nl).

An expanded successor to the Birds of Bolivia, this CD-ROM contains recordings of 941 species and photographs of over 800 species. Indispensable to field-workers and birding visitors to this bird-rich country.

Stopover ecology of Nearctic-Neotropical landbird migrants: habitat relations and conservation implications. MOORE, F.B. (ed.) (2000) Camarillo, CA: Cooper Ornithological Society. \$18.

A collection of nine papers dealing with the ecology, requirements and conservation of American landbirds. While the conservation of waterfowl and waders on migration has received much attention, including the development of refuges, there has been comparatively little work on the significance of stopovers to passerines. Some interesting concepts are developed in these papers which should be applicable more widely.

Chris Mason

Wild Britain. A Traveller's Guide. DOUGLAS BOTTING (ed.)

Wild Spain. A Traveller's Guide. FREDERIC V. GRUNFELD (ed.)

Wild France. A Traveller's Guide. DOUGLAS BOTTING (ed.).

All 1999 editions. London: Sheldrake Press. 224 pages, £12.50 (pbs).

These guides are aimed at those searching for remoter corners of Europe. They follow a standard format with chapters covering major areas including sketches of particular regions. Thus the section on the French Western Mediterranean provides individual sections on La Camargue, Les Alpilles, Roussillon etc. Information is given on activities available with addresses and web-sites for accommodation and symbols signifying the relative wildness of a locality. The books are richly illustrated with colour photographs, sketches and maps. Given the wide scope of the guides, information on bird watching is not detailed but provides a stimulus for further reading. As general overviews and as aides to decisions on where to visit, these volumes provide useful, well laid-out and attractive information packs.

A naturalist's guide to the tropics. MARCO LAMBERTINI (2000) Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 312 pages, \$25 or £17.50 (pb).

The book covers all of the world's tropics and comprises a dozen chapters. There are short overviews of geography, climate and soils followed by accounts of flora, fauna, mangroves, forests, coral reefs, savannas and deserts. The final chapters focus on threats to these habitats and advice on possible dangers awaiting travellers. The author aims, by drawing examples from diverse regions, to emphasize the common characteristics of tropical habitat types. The colour plates are of exceptional quality. There are also colour plates, sketches and text boxes giving summary information on topics ranging from jungle cicadas to cyclones and hurricanes. The scope is wide but avoids superficiality and while the title may suggest a travelogue, the text provides a comprehensive education and shares the excitement of understanding something about tropical biology.

Sheila Mason