

Book review

Edited by D. Jones

The Birds of CITES and How to Identify Them by J. Erritzoe illustrated by H.B. Erritzoe and J. Erritzoe

1993. *The Lutterworth Press, Cambridge*. Pp. 199
+xxii, colour plates 85. 210 x 297 mm. \$200.

The author anticipates that this manual will be used by 'all those with the purview of the rules laid down by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species [CITES] of wild fauna and flora, also known as CITES (e.g. aviculturists, importers, taxidermists, scientific institutions, conservationists, tourists and controlling authorities)'. This goal is admirable, especially in view of the variation in skills among the putative users at bird identification.

Before the publication of this volume, a basic manual in black and white was the only documentation of all animals listed under CITES. In 1988, Johannes Erritzoe, a Danish artist and 'scientific' conservationist and Helga B. Erritzoe, artist and wife, were commissioned by the CITES Secretariat to describe and illustrate the birds in colour.

The introductory pages open with a quick guide to all the families listed under CITES and are illustrated by 158 representative pen-and-ink drawings. Under each family name, the English name(s) of the group, the number of species and their continental distribution are briefly listed. A glossary and black and white illustrations of the topography of a bird follows the quick guide. Although such information is found in many introductory texts on ornithology, most of the anticipated users of this volume would be unfamiliar with such works. Its inclusion is, therefore, necessary for understanding the textual description and subsequent identification of a species. The last introductory page concludes with a colour guide which follows Smithe (1975) to some extent. The names of 54 colours in common usage are listed alphabetically with a number that matches its hue. Unfortunately, the value of this colour chart is debatable. For example, the Orange-bellied Parrot *Neophema chrysogaster* is described as having 'bright grass-green' upperparts, a colour that is not listed in the colour guide. The plumage of another bird is described a 'pinkish' which, when sighted in the colour guide, more closely resembles pale orange. To the novice, the inclusion of a colour chart that does not include all the colour references cited in the text or represents common colours in an unfamiliar hue, tends to create confusion and misleads rather than elucidating the user.

The manual is mainly organised around 406 birds which appear in Lists I, II and III of the appendices of CITES as agreed at the meeting in Japan in 1992. Birds which are similar in appearance and not included in List I but appear in List II, are illustrated in black and white and are only mentioned by their scientific and English name. These birds comprise the birds of prey (269 species), the cranes (nine species), the parrots (283 species), the owls (145 species), the hummingbirds (326 species) and the birds of paradise (40 species). Although 'technical language' is avoided as much as possible, the accounts of species are numbered and listed by scientific names within families. The numbering of the species is not a unique identifier but accumulates within the family even though the family name does not appear as a major heading anywhere in the chapter of the accounts of species. In a smaller font, the common names are presented in English, French, German, Italian and Spanish, followed by descriptions of the species' range, its identification, its listing in the appendices of CITES and other sources of information. The taxonomy and description of the ranges of species follow those suggested by Sibley & Monroe (1991). Because the author has targeted those persons involved with the implementation of CITES regulations, only those characters which are relevant to inspection of birds in the hand are described for identification. These characters include body length, colour of the adult plumage (both sexes if sexually dimorphic) and soft parts. The description of juveniles is included only if they differ markedly from adults. Illustrations of species appear on the facing page of their accounts.

Without doubt, the illustrations are meritorious, rich in colour and form. Although behavioural characteristics and other features of field identification were reasonably omitted from the species descriptions, the artists, in addition to pure illustration, have also shared their personal impressions of a species' behaviour. For example, a pair of Coxen's Double-eyed Fig Parrot *Cyclopsitta diophthalma coxeni* is depicted on the ground in a huddle. Although this inaccuracy does not detract from the illustrations as an aid for its identification, it is nevertheless misleading and raises questions of accuracy concerning other aspects of the book.

The manual closes with 432 references to the literature (some of which are as recent as 1991), the articles and appendices of the CITES legislation, a dictionary of common English words translated into French, German and Spanish, an index of the plate and page numbers that are organised by scientific names and a colour

map of the countries of the world identified by a number which matches an alphabetical list.

A test of the usefulness of this manual with students of zoology and veterinary science who may well have a need for its use in the future, highlighted some organisational flaws. Although most were aware of the scientific nomenclature, they had a greater familiarity with the common names of birds. When shown the manual, all subjects were initially drawn to the 'quick guide' of families in an attempt to identify what group of species a bird may belong. Without any listing of the relevant page number of the family, species' accounts or plates, the students had no alternative but to flick through every page to find an illustration that resembled the bird of interest. This task not only detracts from its value as a 'quick guide' but was particularly frustrating because family names are not highlighted as headings and species are listed by scientific names. Once the species account was located, the students were still not confident of their identification and sought to find a list of similar species with which the bird of interest may be confused, whether CITES-listed or not. A quick glance at the other source information (listed by reference number in the species account) did not provide any joy because some of the numbers matched literature that was clearly irrelevant and incorrectly coded. The map of locations also lacked clarity which detract-

ed from its usefulness. For example, in Indonesia it was impossible to identify the locations of Bali and the Greater Sunda Islands. Although its format of ring-binding will allow easy amendment of information, most of these shortcomings should dissipate with regular use.

Because of the reliance on scientific names and its organisational difficulties, I suspect that some of those persons 'with the purview of the rules laid down by [CITES]' may be tentative in using this manual. However, despite these shortcomings, it should be a tool on the shelf of any person involved with implementing CITES regulations, mainly because there is no other volume that collectively illustrates the birds listed under CITES.

References

- Sibley, C. & Monroe, B.L. 1991. *Distribution and Taxonomy of Birds of the World*. Yale University Press, New Haven.
- Smithe, F.B. 1975. *Naturalist's Color Guide*. AMNH, New York.

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