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書 評 Book Review

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『マダガスカル鳥類フィールドガイド』 / Ny Vorona Malagasy/A Field Guide to the Birds of Madagascar. 山岸 哲編著, 増田智久・H. ラクトゥマナナ著, 海遊舎, 2,400円.

Illustrations of birds from Madagascar have always been uncommon despite the importance of these birds to the ornithological and conservation communities. Early lavish works (e.g., Milne-Edwards and Grandidier 1878-1885) are now scarce and found only in the collections of research libraries and wealthy collectors. Another attempt at illustrating Malagasy birds came nearly 90 years later with the publication of the bird volume in the *Faune de Madagascar* series (Milon *et al.* 1973). While successful in showing most of the island's birds, the quality of the plates was uneven. The need for readily available, accurate, comprehensive illustrations of Malagasy birds was not fulfilled until the 1990s with three illustrated guides, two in English and the bilingual guide reviewed here (Yamagishi *et al.* 1997).

The decade started with the first real field guide to the birds of Madagascar (Langrand 1990) which illustrated nearly all the birds known from the island at that time with color plates of paintings. In the past two years, two photographic guides of Malagasy birds have appeared (Yamagishi *et al.* 1997, Morris and Hawkins 1998). This review will consider the largely successful bilingual (Japanese/Malagasy) collaboration of Hajanirina Rakotomanana of Madagascar and two Japanese ornithologists, Satoshi Yamagishi and Tomohisa Masuda (Yamagishi *et al.* 1997).

The *Field Guide to the Birds of Madagascar* of Yamagishi, Masuda and Rakotomanana is directed toward an amateur audience, especially Japanese tourists to Madagascar. The authors state that their goal is to provide a photographic guide to many of the more commonly seen Malagasy birds. One hundred species are illustrated and described. One additional species, Brown Mesite *Mesitornis unicolor*, is described but only its nest is illustrated.

I compliment the authors for including a Malagasy text in this guide. Certainly, more text and photographs could have been included if the book had been in one language or the other only. Unfortunately, a strictly Malagasy version would likely never have been published because of the economic difficulties facing Madagascar. Therefore, the authors are to be congratulated in sacrificing some of the Japanese text in order to include the Malagasy text. The Malagasy text is a shortened version of the Japanese text because Japanese characters take up less space than do the arabic characters used in Malagasy (H. Rakotomanana, personal communication). Nonetheless, the book should still appeal to a Malagasy audience. Ideally, this book should be in every school and library in Madagascar.

The book is divided into five main sections. The first section describes how to use the guide book and gives a brief overview of the island's terrestrial ecosystems and its protected natural areas. Included is a fine selection of photographs of the various ecosystems. The bulk of the book consists of four sections which depict and describe

the birds. The four sections cover, in order, forest birds, shorebirds, birds of dry areas and birds which live near humans. Appropriately, the largest section covers forest birds since many of the island's birds inhabit forest of one sort or another. The book concludes with brief discussions of new birds described in recent years, fossil birds of Madagascar, endemism among Malagasy birds and a bibliography. Finally, there is a useful table of the scientific, Japanese, Malagasy and English names for the island's birds.

The accounts provide brief and largely accurate written descriptions of the species in terms of their size, color, habitats used, foods eaten, how often they are seen, behavior and the sounds they make. Japanese readers will find useful the size comparisons between Malagasy and Japanese birds.

I liked how much additional information about each bird is conveyed graphically. For each species there are four boxes which correspond to a map showing the four major vegetation types of Madagascar. The number of boxes that are colored corresponds to the number of vegetation types in which the bird lives. This grouping of birds by habitats seems appropriated for the intended audience who might not be familiar with the taxonomic arrangements found in many field guides. Further, island and regional (western Indian Ocean) endemics are indicated with colored stars next to the bird's name.

The most innovative graphical feature is used to indicate the size of the bird. In a page corner, the bird's silhouette is shown in proportion to the size of the book. This feature helps overcome one of the more serious drawbacks with photographic guides— not knowing the bird's size. Guides illustrated by paintings regularly portray together similarly sized birds in accurate proportions in order to overcome this problem. To date, photographic guides have not provided a visual scale by which to judge the size of a bird. The use of the bird and book icons together by Yamagishi *et al.* (1997) is a useful breakthrough in helping overcome the scale problem in a photographic guide. Overall, I found the graphical conveyance of information efficient, easy to understand, and something other field guides should consider using.

In addition to the book's graphical features, I like other aspects of this book. In particular, the photographs reveal information that will be new and interesting to professional ornithologists. For example, many species are shown at their nests. Some of these nests have never before been described or illustrated. For example, the nest of Nuthatch Vanga *Hypositta corallirostris* is shown to be an open cup covered on the outside with moss. While *Hypositta* has been assigned to different families in the past, it has rested with the vangas (Vangidae or Vangini) since the work of Jean Dorst (1960a, b, c). Its nest closely resembles that of two other vangas nesting in rain forest Helmet Vanga *Euryceros prevostii* and Rufous Vanga *Schetba rufa* and is unlike that of the cavity-nesting nuthatches (Sittidae). Thus, this photograph provides additional evidence against placing *Hypositta* with the true nuthatches.

In addition the photographs portray some behaviours that will interest ornithologists. Again, *Hypositta corallirostris* provides a useful example. A male is shown in a characteristic posture clinging to a tree trunk. The position of the hind toe (number

one) is of particular interest since it is swung laterally toward the outer anterior toe (number four). In this position, the toe might add extra support against gravitational forces which pull the hanging bird away from the trunk. This same lateral rotation of the hind toes in aid of climbing occurs in toes one and four in the zygodactyl feet of some woodpeckers (Picidae) (Bock and Miller 1959). The extensive fusion of the three anterior toes in *Hypositta*, especially the nearly complete fusion of the outer and middle anterior toes (Rand 1936), might hinder these toes from being moved laterally. Thus the hind toe might support *Hypositta* in a climbing position and warrants further study. In addition, a remarkable photograph on page 121 shows a Sicklebill Vanga *Falcolea palliata* with nearly two-thirds of its upper mandible inserted into a dead tree trunk. The photo suggests one way in which this vanga uses its beak, perhaps the most atypical among this group of birds, while foraging.

While the photographs depict features of interest to professional ornithologists, their true worth will be in their aid in identification. Some of the photographs are of the highest quality. I especially liked those by Masuda of Rufous Vanga (page 58), Crested Drongo *Dicrurus forficatus* (page 76) and Red-capped Coua *Coua ruficeps* (page 113). Unfortunately, other photographs, including some of my own, are not of the same quality. Some photographs, especially those taken in the rain forest, suffer from poor exposure, poor focus, grainy texture or distracting foregrounds. A few photographs may not show enough of the bird (e.g., Madagascar Blue Pigeon *Alectroenas madagascariensis* on page 36) for identification purposes. Nonetheless, most photographs will prove adequate for identifying the species in question.

While having many fine features, this guide is not without some defects. Given the authors' intent to show commonly seen species, my main complaint is the choice of species shown. Some species in this guide, such as Yellow-bellied Sunbird-asisy *Neodrepanis hypoxantha* and Short-legged Ground-roller *Brachypteracias leptosomus*, are decidedly rare and are unlikely to be seen. However, I agree with the authors' inclusion of rare species that can be seen at the readily accessible Ampijoroa forestry station in western Madagascar, such as Madagascar Fish Eagle *Haliaeetus vociferodius*, White-breasted Mesite *Mesitornis variegata* and Van Dam's Vanga *Xenopirostris damii*. Other illustrated species, for example, Crossley's Babbler *Mystacornis crossleyi*, are more common but are still unlikely to be seen because of their inconspicuous habits.

Missing from the guide are some common species that tourists are likely to encounter. I might include in this group species such as Eleonora's Falcon *Falco eleonora*, Sooty Falcon *Falco concolor*, Spectacled Greenbul *Phyllastrephus zosterops*, Red-tailed Vanga *Calicalicus madagascariensis*, Madagascar Brush-warbler *Nesillas typica*, and Stonechat *Saxicola torquata*. Nonetheless, the authors have done a good job overall in their choice of species to include.

I found a few factual errors in the species accounts but these are unlikely to diminish the guide's usefulness for identification. For example, the Madagascar Crested Ibis *Lophotibis cristata* is said to number less than 1000 individuals and to inhabit undisturbed forest only. To the contrary, its numbers likely exceed 1000 individuals given

that it lives in all the main forest types throughout most of the island and because it also uses some disturbed forests. Although the guide inaccurately describes the number of Madagascar Crested Ibises and their use of disturbed forest, the bird is adequately illustrated and its appearance is accurately described nonetheless. Similarly, the other minor errors will not hinder identifications.

While the authors tried to keep this book affordable (2400 yen), it is too expensive for most Malagasy to purchase. For example, average per capita income in Madagascar is less than US\$250 (approximately 29000 yen). Therefore, any conservation or philathropic group wanting to promote the protection of Madagascar's birds would do good service by distributing copies of this book to the schools and libraries of Madagascar.

Overall, this guide will appeal to amateur Japanese and Malagasy audiences and should prove useful in identifying many, but not all, of the more commonly seen species. Professional ornithologists will also find some parts of the guide worthwhile. Those with a strong interest in bird identification should also carry with them either of the two modern English language guides (Langrand 1990, Morris and Hawkins 1998).

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